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President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

High-level meeting on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/780)

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/62/CRP.1 and Corr.1)

The Acting President: There are still 26 speakers inscribed on the list of speakers. In order to conclude the high-level meeting this afternoon while accommodating all speakers, I would like to strongly appeal to speakers to limit their statements to five minutes.

I now give the floor to the chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): I would like to join previous speakers in expressing deep appreciation to the United Nations for the extraordinary leadership it has displayed in its tireless efforts to combat the HIV epidemic in cooperation with national Governments, donors and other stakeholders.

Meeting here this afternoon, we cannot deny the sobering fact that the AIDS pandemic still poses daunting challenges. Statistics revealing that in 2007 an estimated 2.5 million people had become infected with HIV and 2.1 million had died of AIDS serve as an alarming reminder of the urgency of this issue. As we have seen from the harrowing history of the epidemic, AIDS is not just a public health problem, but also a profound threat to human life that undermines fundamental human rights and causes tremendous loss due to the social and economic burdens it imposes. In addition, the global toll taken by AIDS hinders prospects for both poverty reduction and economic development. Against that backdrop, allow me to share some ideas on how to effectively galvanize an effective response to the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

I believe that regions with a high prevalence of HIV must first muster their own will and political leadership and step up to the challenges. Simultaneously, the international community must also do its part to assist those regions in their struggle to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS. To that end, there is a need to promote better coordination among Governments, civil society and international organizations, within and between countries.

In order to ensure a substantial prevention response, individuals, communities and societies should be educated and informed on how best to avoid infection. The sustainability of such efforts should also

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be ensured. In that regard, it is crucial that we provide accurate information on HIV/AIDS by conducting public awareness campaigns, promoting education through various channels and scaling up access to voluntary testing and counselling services.

The provision of proper treatment — including by expanding access to life-preserving HIV treatment and services such as antiretroviral treatment programmes for those already infected — will be vitally important not only for the protection of human rights but also for the prevention of HIV/AIDS. In addition to treatment and support, good nutrition is indispensable in order to ensure more effective care for HIV-positive individuals.

It is also imperative to formulate national strategic plans for the protection of such vulnerable groups as women and young people. Half of all those living with HIV are female and HIV infection among young people is on the rise, underlining the urgency of the need to focus on those groups.

Although Korea has an HIV prevalence rate of less than 0.1 per cent, that rate is nevertheless increasing steadily. Korea simply cannot afford to lapse into complacency. I should like to take this important opportunity to say that my Government will seek to draw valuable lessons from the sharing of observations and best practices in developing our national response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

First of all, in order to contribute to global efforts to achieve the targets set out in 2001 and 2006, the Korean Government has continued to make contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It has also announced an additional pledge of $10 million over three years beginning in 2007. That is in addition to its ever-increasing efforts as a member of the Executive Board of the International Drug Purchase Facility.

At the bilateral level, Korea has committed itself to fund a joint effort with the United Nations Development Programme to prevent HIV/AIDS among women and girls in the Republic of the Congo. We have also committed ourselves to participating in the strategic planning and implementation of an HIV/AIDS response and capacity development project in Nigeria. To that end, Korea has pledged $1.5 million.

Secondly, the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS in many countries continue to be major obstacles to grounding the AIDS response in the field of human rights. Korea is no exception in that regard. The stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDS may stem from lack of information, false belief, prejudice and fear of the disease. Furthermore, such stigma and discrimination can impede efforts to mobilize active cooperation on AIDS prevention from businesses, pharmaceutical companies, the media, regional organizations, national assemblies and even the political leadership itself.

Last but not least, the Korean Government is endeavouring to promote accurate and complete knowledge of the facts relating to HIV by conducting health education and public awareness campaigns through various channels. In particular, coordinated campaigns through television and other mass media outlets can play an active role in addressing misperceptions about the disease and eliminating discrimination against infected individuals and the stigma associated with the disease.

In conclusion, the Korean Government would once again like to express its sincere appreciation to the United Nations for its continuing efforts in combating AIDS. In that regard, I am confident that this meeting will serve as an opportunity to take stock of our previous efforts and to further reinvigorate our commitment in the global fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairperson of the delegation of Colombia.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Rio Group in connection with the subject we are considering today.

Colombia has taken on significant challenges in order to bring the HIV/AIDS epidemic under control. The epidemic in Colombia is characterized as low-prevalence, with a growing rate of infection among women. Available studies point to an estimated prevalence rate of 0.7 per cent among people between 15 and 49 years of age. Although the number of registered cases is lower than that rate would imply, we are aware of the fact that there are infected individuals who have not yet had access to diagnosis.

Diagnosed cases in our country are concentrated among certain at-risk populations. Some local studies have found a higher prevalence among men who have sex with men and in women sex workers. Moreover, we have identified specific vulnerability factors among young people of both sexes, women, internally displaced persons, people who live on the streets and imprisoned persons, among other groups.

Colombia has enacted national health and social security legislation that defines institutional frameworks to respond to HIV/AIDS. In addition, there are specific norms regarding the services provided by the State and on protecting the rights of affected populations. A new national multisectoral response plan to HIV/AIDS for the period 2008-2011 was adopted in 2007. It includes measures in the areas of prevention, comprehensive care, support and social protection, and follow-up and evaluation of efforts.

In 2006, about $100 million was devoted to the implementation of HIV/AIDS interventions, 95 per cent of which came from the Government. Sixty-four per cent of that budget was earmarked for care and treatment, while 34 per cent was devoted to preventive efforts. Those resources have made it possible to strengthen monitoring processes and programmes to prevent the transmission of HIV from mother to child, as well as to expand comprehensive care for patients.

The health-care system now includes all the medications and laboratory procedures available in Colombia to diagnose and follow-up people living with HIV. Diagnostic services have been expanded, as has treatment for pregnant women. We also now provide medications and supplies of baby formula for children born of HIV-infected mothers. Access to condoms is ensured for persons diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. In addition, through efforts at the community level and thanks to a Global Fund project, condoms are being provided to the most vulnerable populations.

The coverage rate for access to antiretroviral drugs is nearly 75 per cent in Colombia. That result has been made possible thanks to a structural policy aimed at expanding access to the health-care system, which guarantees comprehensive services for infected people. We hope to achieve universal coverage; however, given the expansion of the epidemic, the high cost of treatment and the need to extend access to second- and third-line drugs, it will be difficult to fund the provision of medication. That may delay the achievement of universal access. There is a need for greater international support in that regard.

In combating HIV/AIDS, the Government of Colombia believes that an approach based on human rights that safeguards the dignity of the human person is crucial to creating an environment in which communities and individuals can work together with the State. There is also a need to strengthen confidence in the Government's services, as well as to eradicate the stigma, fear and secrecy that ultimately make it difficult to control the epidemic. We must also redouble efforts to eradicate the discrimination that infected populations still suffer.

Likewise, we must strengthen sex education programmes. They must be based on human rights, guarantee the enjoyment of reproductive and sexual rights and include a clear focus on gender and respect for differences. In addition, the rights-based approach must include appropriate provision of quality accessible social services.

Developing inclusive social protection programmes is a priority in controlling the epidemic and strengthening prevention strategies. As the poorest populations are at greater risk and vulnerability, preventive efforts must be based on national development plans focused directly on the reduction of poverty. Efforts in that regard must be part of both HIV interventions and, above all, development efforts that have a sustainable impact on the epidemic. That approach is all the more important given the high rates of poverty in various parts of the world, including in middle-income countries.

Colombia recognizes the role of civil society as a fundamental actor in the response to HIV/AIDS. In my country, the participation of non-governmental organizations has been essential in education and prevention, the promotion of rights, wider access to comprehensive care and the implementation of productive projects. Their technical expertise, leadership and ongoing call for the strengthening of State and social responses to the epidemic are a necessary complement to the Government's efforts in that area.

Colombia reiterates its commitment to the response to HIV/AIDS, and joins the Assembly in calling on the international community to strengthen technical and financial cooperation in that field. The joint efforts of States and international cooperation organizations is crucial to filling existing access gaps, providing care to populations most at risk, implementing comprehensive prevention strategies, guaranteeing adequate diagnosis and treatment supplies, and improving epidemiological research. Cooperation is a key factor in achieving the Millennium Development Goals on this matter. My delegation hopes that the primary outcome of this follow-up meeting will be the solid reaffirmation of the political will and strengthened cooperation necessary to reduce vulnerability and to improve global and national responses to the HIV/AIDS problem.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): We would like to thank President Kerim for convening this high-level meeting, which emphasizes the international concern and the extreme importance of addressing HIV/AIDS, a disease that continues to cause immense suffering and innumerable deaths in every part of the world.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/780), which provides very useful suggestions for addressing this problem in a more coherent and effective way.

The Government of San Marino is tackling its domestic HIV challenge through prevention and education. Moreover, specialized centres provide our women with information on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Our national health plan provides care to our citizens and monitors HIV/AIDS cases among the San Marino population, guaranteeing free treatment and anonymity to all patients.

At the international level, San Marino, among other projects, has participated in the UNICEF campaign "Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS", and co-financed a pilot project in Gabon with Andorra, Liechtenstein and Monaco. That campaign has focused on strengthening the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, paediatric treatment and services, prevention among adolescents and young people, and protection and care. Finally, the Republic of San Marino is offering help through UNICEF to youth-run organizations in developing countries that aim to promote children's rights and public awareness among young people, including on HIV/AIDS.

With more than 30 million people worldwide living with HIV and more than 2 million AIDS deaths per year, we are convinced that only together can Member States, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the media, and the business and private sectors successfully fight that global scourge. The broad participation in this high-level meeting underlines once again the deep political will and the commitment of all nations in tackling that global challenge.

The Government and the people of San Marino are determined to share that responsibility with the international community.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Morocco.

Mr. Chabar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I am gratified to express the pleasure of the Kingdom of Morocco at the decision taken by this Assembly to hold a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS. We welcome this opportunity to reiterate our strong commitment to combating that disastrous pandemic and our full support for the Millennium Development Goals, which made health an inalienable human right. We wish this noble initiative every success, and we hope that our commitment will mobilize the resources necessary to fight that deadly scourge.

I should now like to pay sincere tribute to those present here who are living with HIV/AIDS. How can we not express our solidarity with them? Let us commend them for the courage they have shown, and express our profound respect.

Our thanks also go to the stakeholders of civil society for their crucial work. We are proud to have them with us today, mobilized as ever to stem a tidal wave that respects no geographical boundary.

When we hear the numbers and the testimony, it is indeed difficult to remain calm at the spread of a daunting danger that continues to belie even the worst-case scenarios. Given the magnitude of the scourge, only a joint political will, combined with concerted multilateral action, will overcome the high humanitarian price of the epidemic.

My delegation notes with clear interest the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/780) before us and, in particular, the recommendation on the need for high-income countries to guarantee universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support.

While progress in providing access to treatment is encouraging, it is distressing for all of us here to note that there is still a dichotomy between, on the one hand, the advanced States that have controlled the epidemic and, on the other hand, the developing countries, whose indicators are not very optimistic, particularly in Africa, where HIV/AIDS continues to pose one of the most serious threats to development.

Time is running out to attain the goal of universal access to prevention and treatment by 2010. Only a more substantial increase in financial assistance, combined with emergency measures, will enable us to achieve that objective and thereby improve access by all to care and support services, without discrimination.

My delegation notes with profound alarm the increasing impact of gender inequality, which continues to promote the spread of HIV/AIDS by considerably reducing the autonomy and capacity of women and girls to counter the risk of contracting the infection. It is therefore crucial that Governments mobilize at the political and social levels to combat sexist prejudices in the context of their national campaigns against HIV/AIDS.

The campaign against HIV/AIDS is a priority for Morocco, which has established an integrated strategy to combat the scourge. One demonstration of that commitment was Morocco's presentation early this year of its strategic regional plan and its 2008-2009 plan of action to fight AIDS, which are both part of the overall scope of the national initiative for human development launched by King Mohammed VI in 2005. That ambitious and realistic plan of action seeks to stabilize and even reduce prevalence rates, which will require the broader mobilization of all relevant stakeholders in order significantly to increase coverage of the most vulnerable populations and reduce the impact on those living with HIV.

My delegation is today happy to announce that widespread access to combination antiretroviral therapy is definitely one of my country's significant advances in its campaign against HIV/AIDS. Thanks to the support and mobilization of all our national and international partners, my country has attained one of its goals: free access to combination antiretroviral therapy for all AIDS patients in Morocco, without exception. The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its willingness to share its experience with the international community, and in particular with our brotherly African countries.

The personal commitment of Princess Lalla Salma, who participated, at the margins of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, in the meeting of the First Ladies of Africa to combat HIV/AIDS, attests to the level of political commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco. That commitment is reflected in the very fabric of Moroccan society. The efforts of our public authorities to raise awareness and provide treatment have greatly contributed to the fight against this scourge. My delegation welcomes the positive impact of the meeting of First Ladies, which adopted the programme to combat AIDS in Africa for 2005-2006. We reiterate from this rostrum the tireless support of the Kingdom of Morocco for the international efforts to combat AIDS in Africa.

In that regard, my country would like once again to appeal for the mobilization of further resources in order to address this deadly pandemic, which continues to be so destructive in Africa. I stress that the epidemic can be overcome only through true development in Africa, which requires not only active solidarity, but also the honest commitment of developing countries.

The food crisis that some countries in the South are experiencing is one of the clearest illustrations of the difficulties that developing countries are facing and is, of course, jeopardizing their efforts and resources to combat this — as yet — deadly epidemic.

We would like to sincerely thank the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS for its support and technical assistance within the context of the Global Fund and for its tireless efforts to ensure the most affected countries access to antiretroviral drugs. The Fund's support is very timely in my country, where it helps us to screen patients and to provide better health care at the local level, including for at-risk groups. The inclusion of prevention issues in curriculums and awareness-raising campaigns targeting young people remain key concerns for the Kingdom of Morocco.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes the many United Nations initiatives and is happy to join its efforts to those of the international community in response to the concerns expressed in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. The Kingdom of Morocco will spare no effort to stop the spread of the scourge and eradicate the epidemic, which threatens not only to undo our efforts, but above all to undermine health security throughout the world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Ireland.

Mr. Kavanagh (Ireland): At the outset, allow me to thank President Kerim for proposing this extremely valuable high-level meeting.

Ireland has prioritized the fight against HIV/AIDS as fundamental to poverty and vulnerability reduction. We are living up to the promises made in the General Assembly in 2001 and 2006. We are currently spending over $150 million per year on combating HIV and other diseases related to poverty.

Ireland's record on the Millennium Development Goals is, we believe, a strong one. We have made very significant increases in overseas aid in recent years. This year, we are spending 0.54 per cent of our gross national product on fighting poverty, hunger and disease.

This week's high-level review of progress towards universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is very timely. Ireland encourages this meeting to send a strong signal to the upcoming G-8 meeting and to the Millennium Development Goals summit in September, where world leaders will agree on a collective response to the multiple needs, threats and challenges, including HIV/AIDS, facing people everywhere.

The leadership of the United Nations is crucial to the global HIV challenge. As co-chair of the General Assembly discussions on United Nations system-wide coherence, I see the fight against AIDS as a benchmark of United Nations reform in action. It is beginning to yield results in delivering as one, and it represents coherence in action. The leadership provided by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and in particular by Mr. Peter Piot, in coordinating and facilitating a joint United Nations response to the global AIDS epidemic is to be commended.

The Secretary-General's report points to the significant results being achieved towards universal access throughout the world. The HIV epidemic is being contained in most regions, except in Eastern Europe. There are enormous advances in HIV treatment, but much remains to be achieved.

As States Members of the United Nations, we need better coordination, especially at the country level. We need to align the significant and much-needed additional resources from the United Nations, the World Bank, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other major bilateral funders with other donor aid mechanisms. We need to do that consistent with agreed international commitments to improve aid effectiveness and promote local ownership.

There have been significant increases in the numbers of HIV/tuberculosis co-infections, and there is a need for further investment in second-line antiretrovirals. Ireland supports the call for stronger collaborative activities to address the increasing levels of HIV/tuberculosis co-infection.

The evidence shows that we need to do more on HIV prevention. We need to invest more in prevention programmes, in particular those targeted at high-risk populations. Prevention is indeed at the core of our HIV strategy. Ireland will launch its first 5-year national HIV prevention action plan next week, prioritizing the need for strong leadership, increasing knowledge and awareness of HIV transmission and providing key prevention services to those most at risk.

It is unlikely that HIV will cease to be a major cause of inequality, vulnerability and ill health until appropriate technological solutions are found that can effectively prevent HIV transmission. We should continue to invest in good-quality science to find effective HIV preventive medicines, vaccines and microbicides directed at controlling the pandemic.

Female-controlled HIV prevention commodities are central to addressing women's and young girls' disproportionate vulnerability to HIV. Ireland is committed to addressing the particular vulnerabilities of women and young girls, especially in poor countries. Addressing gender-based violence as a core HIV prevention strategy is one of our key priorities.

There is a direct link between the well-being of women and that of children. The increasing number of women testing HIV-positive and the consequent rise in perinatal HIV transmission underscores the importance that Ireland places on gender equality. Prevention of mother-to-child transmission is a policy priority for my country.

The Secretary-General's report (A/62/780) highlights the special plight of children infected and affected by HIV. Their situation calls for urgent attention. The fourth Global Partners Forum on Children Affected by HIV and AIDS will be held in Ireland in October. Bringing together global leaders and decision makers, the forum will focus on key priorities to address the needs of children living in a world with HIV. Priority issues will include the extension of social protection mechanisms to benefit children, removing the barriers to essential services, keeping mothers alive and families together, and supporting community-based responses to meeting children's needs.

We have worked hard to address HIV-related stigmatization and discrimination in Ireland. With the leadership and active engagement of people living with HIV in its design and implementation, a national campaign is increasing awareness and understanding of HIV, while highlighting the irrationality of stigmatization and discrimination at home and abroad. Our Government will continue to support that crucial campaign.

Representatives of civil society, including faith-based organizations, are critical partners in Ireland's response. We are very pleased to be joined in the Hall today by representatives of civil society from Ireland and other countries. Their work is to be commended.

Ireland has a strong focus on addressing world hunger and food insecurity. We are particularly concerned about the impact of the current increases in global food prices for AIDS-affected communities. Addressing food security and nutrition in all settings is vital to achieving the goal of universal access. Ireland is committed to supporting multisectoral HIV programming that incorporates effective food and nutrition interventions as a way of reducing vulnerability to HIV infection and increasing resilience to AIDS.

The international community has the capacity, the medicines, the know-how and the institutions to address the challenge that the pandemic poses to achieving universal access and the Millennium Development Goals. We now need the political will and the resources to sustain and increase the response to the challenges of the global HIV pandemic. We all need to play our part in ensuring that the AIDS pandemic remains a global priority for action even as other pressing challenges emerge. Ireland can be relied upon to play its part.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Mauritius.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius): I join previous speakers in thanking President Kerim for convening this high-level meeting. I also wish to commend the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/62/780. Let me also add that my delegation subscribes to the statements made by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Egypt on behalf of the Group of African States, and Zambia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

In the light of the report of the Secretary-General and the various statements that we have heard over the past two days, it is more than evident that world leaders, Governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), inter alia, are more committed than ever in their resolve to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is no doubt that progress has been made to curtail the expansion of the epidemic. However, the question that we all ask is whether we have achieved enough since the 2006 high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS. The answer, unfortunately, is not very encouraging, as evidenced by the facts and figures in the Secretary-General's report:

> "Current trends suggest that the world will fall short of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, without a significant increase in the level of resources available for HIV programmes in low- and middle-income countries." (*A/62/780, para. 16*)

Global coverage for prevention of mother-to-child transmission accounts for only 34 per cent, in contrast to the pledged target of 80 per cent.

"Children still accounted for one in six new HIV infections ... The majority of children infected prematurely die before the age of two" (*ibid., para. 32*). "[S]ome countries that reported early success against the epidemic are having difficulty in sustaining previous achievements" (*ibid., para. 15*). "The number of patients needing therapy continues to outstrip available financial, human and logistical resources" (*ibid., para. 13*).

Furthermore, sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most afflicted by HIV/AIDS. In 2007, it accounted for over two thirds of all adults living with HIV, 90 per cent of the world's HIV-infected children and three quarters of all AIDS deaths. That is undeniably a very gloomy and frightening picture for a continent that is still struggling to address the most pressing needs of its citizens — extreme poverty and hunger. HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa is taking a high toll on human lives, including semi-skilled and skilled workers and professionals who are already in short supply, thereby seriously undermining genuine efforts for the development of the region. In order to overcome that humanitarian crisis, it is imperative that the international community take immediate action to follow through on the pledges made since 2001.

Tuberculosis is one of the greatest threats to the health of people living with HIV. It is therefore necessary to prevent the development and spread of tuberculosis, and specifically drug-resistant tuberculosis. Increased awareness is needed regarding the links between those two diseases and the need to scale up universal access to integrated tuberculosis and HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services.

Allow me to touch briefly on some of the important facts about HIV/AIDS in Mauritius. The overall rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Mauritius is about 1.8 per cent. However, although the rate of prevalence is very low, the Government strongly believes that political commitment is vital in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It has therefore increased the amount allocated to HIV/AIDS by 50 per cent in this year's budget.

Through the National AIDS Committee chaired by the Prime Minister, the Government is implementing a multisectoral strategic plan for dealing with HIV/AIDS. It provides antiretroviral treatment free of charge to all HIV-infected persons, has scaled up the voluntary counselling and testing service at the national level, and implements a programme to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

The Government also recognizes the very important role that NGOs play in helping to reduce the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In that context, it has provided funds to three NGOs to assist them in their activities.

The Government has also set as a priority the minimizing of the transmission of HIV among the most at-risk populations, namely, intravenous drugs users, commercial sex workers and prison inmates. In that respect, a three-pronged strategic approach is being implemented to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS to intravenous drug users through methadone substitution therapy, HIV/AIDS legislation and a needle-exchange programme.

We acknowledge that the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic is not easy to win. The lack of financial resources and trade-related aspects of the intellectual property rights concerning drugs constitute major obstacles to addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Those infected with HIV/AIDS not only require antiretroviral drugs to attend to their immediate needs, but they also need them at cheaper, that is affordable, prices. In that context, it is absolutely essential that States have the flexibility to relax patent protection and thus be able to lower drug prices in times of public health emergency.

In addition to those issues, prevention should remain our highest priority. We need to invest heavily in key infrastructural facilities and services to provide better health-care services and education opportunities. A healthy and educated population constitutes the bedrock of a forward-looking society. In that respect, we need the concerted efforts of all stakeholders — Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the pharmaceutical industries, medical researchers and the private sector — as well as the support of regional and international institutions and organizations.

In conclusion, let me say that the President of the General Assembly rightly pointed out in his opening address to this body that "Addressing the global challenges of sustainable development, climate change, extreme poverty, hunger, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, are the moral and political imperatives of our times" (*A/62/PV.102*). Indeed they are! However, we could add to those imperatives the urgent reform of international institutions. Without effective and responsive international institutions and organizations, the global challenges would continue to remain challenges, and we would run the risk of missing many more agreed targets.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Albania.

Mr. Neritani (Albania): The participation of so many delegations in this meeting testifies to the serious challenge that our world is facing today, which cannot be met without our joint efforts and adequate resources at the national and international levels. Albania welcomes the approach of this meeting to bring together Governments and civil society, and commends the President of the Assembly for convening this meeting and the report of the Secretary-General for its important findings.

My country fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. Thus, I shall limit my statement to some additional remarks in our national capacity.

Albania shares the concern of many other delegations that the pandemic of HIV/AIDS is not only a major public health issue, but also a development emergency. Epidemics have always been a major threat to humankind, but addressing HIV/AIDS in all its multidimensional aspects will help us to achieve the Millennium Development Goals globally. That is a very difficult call.

My country is facing rapid economic and social developments, which undeniably bring many associated problems common to a free and open society. The first two HIV/AIDS cases in Albania were diagnosed and reported in 1993. Since then, 255 HIV/AIDS cases have been reported; to date, 55 HIV-infected people have died. It is important to mention that in 2007, 44 new HIV cases were reported, of which 31 were in males and 13 in females.

Albania is still considered to be a country with a low prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS. Despite that positive trend, the number of HIV infections is rising, with estimates showing a high number of undiagnosed cases. Meanwhile, other estimates show that Albania could be faced with a rapid increase in cases of HIV/AIDS if sound preventive measures are not implemented effectively and immediately.

That prediction is based on several factors, to mention but a few: the young average age of the population; the high number of Albanian emigrants abroad; the increase in injecting drug users; a relatively low level of knowledge on the issue; certain shortcomings in the primary health-care system regarding prevention and diagnosis; the low level of knowledge and acceptance of condoms; and so on.

The Albanian Government has made serious efforts to implement its national strategy to fight HIV/AIDS for the period 2004-2010 and to raise public awareness of the issue. The strategy aims at creating a strong partnership between the Ministry of Health and non-governmental institutions with the technical and financial support of specialized international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

A national HIV/AIDS programme is also being implemented. A draft law on the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS is now before Parliament, going through the procedures for approval. The main objectives of the national programme are maintaining the low-prevalence profile of HIV/AIDS in the country and ensuring the accessibility and quality of the services necessary for the diagnosis, treatment, counselling, support and care of people at risk and those living with HIV/AIDS.

The Government of Albania is working in close collaboration with a great number of stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, private foundations and other civil society organizations, including associations of people living with HIV/AIDS. We fully support their activities, which are crucial for HIV/AIDS policy development, advocacy and implementation, as well as for the delivery of social services to those affected by the disease. We are working to ensure a close partnership between the public and private sectors as a necessary precondition for an effective and expanded national response to HIV/AIDS.

Increasing attention has been paid to improving the school curriculums on HIV/AIDS education and to increasing the awareness of the public at large by organizing national campaigns on HIV/AIDS issues and by requesting the assistance and cooperation of the media on that matter. Avoidance of prejudice and discrimination is also an important element in the overall fight against HIV/AIDS.

Despite the fact that the international community has invested a considerable amount of resources to tackle HIV/AIDS, the epidemic is far from being under control and the response to the disease continues to be far from sufficiently funded, as the Executive Director of UNAIDS stated earlier. In that regard, while I reiterate the strong commitment of my Government to scale up national expenditure on the fight against HIV/AIDS, I shall use this forum to appeal to others to increasingly unite in their commitments towards effectively fighting HIV/AIDS.

In conclusion, I would like to express once more the support of the Albanian Government to the commitment envisaged by the 2006 Political Declaration, which provides us with guidance in the effective fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Belarus.

Mr. Metelitsa (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I should like to thank the President of the Assembly for having organized this meeting. Belarus has accorded great attention to fighting HIV/AIDS. The United Nations Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has been our reliable partner.

The policy of Belarus in that field is based on the "Three Ones" principle: one national framework strategy, one intersectoral coordinating body and one national monitoring and evaluation system. In addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we have drawn up a national prevention programme for the period 2006-2010 and a strategic plan to fight HIV infections for the period 2004-2008. To monitor and assess the situation concerning HIV/AIDS, we have established a national advisory council that includes State bodies, international and non-governmental organizations, representatives of the private sector and of the Orthodox Church, as well as those infected with HIV/AIDS.

In the six cities with the highest rate of prevalence, groups of sisters of mercy and social workers have been set up to provide treatment, psychological assistance and care. Mutual assistance groups organize round tables, training sessions and conferences that cover medical, socio-psychological, juridical and other questions to cultivate an attitude of tolerance towards those suffering from HIV/AIDS and to improve the quality of their lives.

In the sphere of HIV/AIDS prevention, Belarus has established 52 anonymous consultation centres financed from the State budget and by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Anonymous testing and free prevention are available. A set of measures have been carried out for HIV/AIDS prevention in detention centres and training sessions are held among staff and detainees. We have a single national information system and an effective system for transmitting information from the provinces to the centre. Treatment is a key orientation. HIV/AIDS patients in Belarus enjoy a number of benefits, including access to free medication, and families with children who live with HIV/AIDS are given special monthly allowances.

With the support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and international donors, Belarus is gradually getting closer to achieving universal access to antiretroviral therapy. At the present time, there is 73 per cent coverage. As a result of a set of measures we have undertaken, we have significantly increased the level of information among our people about the dangers of HIV/AIDS. We have also lowered the incidence of mother-to-child HIV transmission and mortality rates.

Unfortunately, the situation remains complex. As was rightly noted by the Permanent Representative of Ireland, the number of HIV/AIDS cases in Eastern Europe, including Belarus, is on the rise, albeit very slowly.

In conclusion, I note the need to further scale up United Nations efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. It is important to concentrate attention not just on increasing financial capacities, but also on resolving such practical issues as training medical staff, expanding access to high quality drugs, qualified planning of national programmes and strategies to combat HIV/AIDS. I would like to assure the Assembly that Belarus will contribute to the best of its ability to international efforts in combating HIV/AIDS.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Israel.

Mr. Fluss (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on your stewardship of this Assembly and thank you for convening this important high-level meeting. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and all the other speakers and panellists for their informative presentations. I want to pay special tribute to the representatives of civil society and the affected victims of the pandemic who have come specially for this meeting.

Since 2001, when the General Assembly convened a special session on HIV/AIDS, the international community has improved its response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Despite unprecedented efforts and cooperation in the field, the spread of HIV/AIDS continues with alarming intensity. As we have seen, good humanitarian and development work alone will not score points with the HIV virus. Last year alone, 2.5 million people were newly infected and 2.1 million people died from AIDS. The rates are particularly distressing in sub-Saharan Africa. We must increase our common efforts together and be much more action-oriented.

Israel is fully committed to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular MDG 6, which calls for a halt to the spread of HIV/AIDS and universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it by 2010. Yet, to meet those goals, the international community must sustain the positive momentum garnered by maintaining and scaling up earlier commitments. Successes must be guarded zealously for progress to take hold. States must also adopt a broad-based approach to combating HIV/AIDS. As an example, the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, the education of young people about HIV/AIDS and preventive measures for sex workers all require distinct modes of communication and involve different actors in transferring the necessary knowledge and establishing the relevant social infrastructures. We must put more effort into developing effective and affordable technologies.

Israel is fortunate to have a low rate of HIV/AIDS, in part thanks to broad-based efforts and programmes. Since 1981, Israel has maintained a national HIV/AIDS register. Health education programmes have been developed for both the general population and groups with high-risk behaviours. HIV testing is available at all community clinics around the country and is confidential and free of charge for any person, citizen or non-citizen, requesting the service. In particular, Israel has enacted landmark legislation authorizing children to request AIDS testing without first obtaining the consent of a parent or guardian. My delegation believes that the implementation of such multi-level strategies allows for a mutually reinforcing effect.

At the global level, Israel affirms its commitment to combating HIV/AIDS worldwide, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a feminization of the pandemic. Increasing numbers of women and girls are being infected. Hence, attention must be paid to the gender aspects of HIV/AIDS, including empowering women and girls, establishing education programmes and addressing threats of sexual abuse and violence. HIV/AIDS care and treatment should be integrated within reproductive and sexual health rights, with a special focus on gender issues and vulnerable groups.

In March and April of this year, Israel hosted an international workshop on care and support for children affected by HIV/AIDS, in cooperation with UNICEF-Africa. At this very moment, Israel's MASHAV Center for International Cooperation is hosting professionals from Nigeria for a course on sexual health and AIDS prevention for adolescents. The course complements other recent programmes held in Israel in cooperation with countries such as Uganda and Kenya, and UNAIDS-West Africa, which utilize a "train the trainer" approach and make for cost-effective, efficient and sustainable educational intervention, as those professionals return to their communities and implement educational programming.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In that light, the partnership between Governments and civil society is crucial. Many Israeli non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are engaged in vital work on the ground in several areas relating to HIV/AIDS prevention, training, capacity-building and care. Those initiatives make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment and enhance regional and international efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Our outreach includes our neighbouring countries as well as the world at large. Allow me to share just one example: an Israeli NGO, the Jerusalem AIDS Project, is engaged in efforts in Swaziland to assist in training Swazi doctors in HIV/AIDS prevention. That has spawned a programme, Operation AB, which deploys Israeli experts to the country to work with local organizations on capacity-building projects.

Lastly, partnerships should be nurtured between developed and developing countries, taking into account all stakeholders and sectors. The challenge of HIV/AIDS is too great to discount the experiences and best practices of others. Israel reaffirms its commitments in that regard and looks forward to following up on this issue in the future.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): I wish to thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to discuss the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and also to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important and timely meeting.

Croatia shares the view of the international community that much more needs to be done on the national, regional and global levels, as the challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic remain as great as ever. It is only through effective, coordinated action on those three levels that we will be able to mitigate the negative impact of the epidemic.

In seeking to advance that comprehensive approach, Croatia has taken a number of measures at the national level. A committee for the prevention of HIV/AIDS was established in 1990, and three years later the Croatian Government adopted a national programme for the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The programme established wide-ranging approaches addressing HIV/AIDS-related problems, including large-scale education, voluntary testing and counselling, and implementing blood and blood product safety measures. A new national programme for 2005-2010 has been adopted and has been implemented since 2005.

Croatia also established a referral, testing and treatment centre and adopted a framework of involvement for non-governmental organizations targeted at vulnerable groups. A highly active antiretroviral treatment programme was introduced through the national insurance scheme in early 1998 and, since then, has been freely available to all persons living with HIV/AIDS in Croatia at no personal cost. In order to establish a truly multisectoral approach, the national HIV/AIDS prevention committee has been granted top-level Government status to ensure the highest possible commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Although fewer than 663 cases of HIV infection have been recorded and all other data indicate a low-level HIV epidemic in Croatia, we are fully aware that we are very close to parts of Eastern Europe where the fastest-growing HIV epidemic rate in the world is currently being observed. The geographical position of Croatia as a transit country, an economy based to a great extent on tourism and the growing number of vulnerable populations represent factors for the possible spread of HIV/AIDS in Croatia.

Therefore, the Croatian Government, with the assistance of many international organizations, is focusing on policies and strategies that will make the public more sensitive to the HIV/AIDS issue, especially among the most vulnerable groups — children, young people and women — while at the same time trying to engage civil society in the national response to the epidemic.

Croatia is also committed to fighting the stigma, fear and discrimination that people living with HIV/AIDS are branded with. Education and preventive programmes in schools and universities, targeting teachers, students and high-risk groups are playing a major role in Croatia's HIV/AIDS policy. Major progress has been achieved and a great deal of effort invested in coordinating the activities of the Government and non-governmental sector. As a result, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare subsidizes the work of several non-governmental organizations and health institutions dealing with HIV/AIDS patients.

Since 2003, Croatia has participated in the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which has financed projects dealing with educating high school children, reducing the risks of infection in high-risk populations, making voluntary testing for HIV/AIDS and counselling more accessible, raising the quality of health care for people living with HIV/AIDS and increasing the quality of measures to monitor the spread of infection.

In the last quarter of 2003, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) regional office for Europe, the Andrija Stampar School of Public Health in Zagreb — whose founder, Dr. Stampar, was the first President of the World Health Assembly, became one of the three Knowledge Hub centres for Central and South-Eastern Europe. The joint efforts of that project focus on HIV/AIDS surveillance in order to enhance the system to prevent and monitor HIV/AIDS cases in the region, since, according to WHO estimates, more than a third of those suffering from AIDS remain unregistered. Moreover, the school was granted the status of a WHO Collaborative Centre for building infrastructure capacity to monitor the HIV/AIDS epidemic. More than 450 participants from 52 countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East have been educated at the Centre.

Finally, Croatia fully supports the activities focused on the prevention of HIV infections outlined in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth special session, and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. My country is also actively involved in the prevention of infection in the framework of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The report on the results achieved thus far with regard to the Declaration has set new challenges, on which we must work together.

Croatia will continue to give its support through existing and new activities in order to achieve a strong and efficient response to the increase of HIV infections in the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this meeting.

HIV/AIDS is one of the most serious problems confronting humankind. For the countries of Central Asia, the expansion of trade, migration, tourism and travel in general have significantly increased the danger of the spread of this disease. Since the disease affects the working population first and foremost and is linked to such dangerous diseases as tuberculosis and drug addiction, which lead to an inability to work and death, it must be seen as one of the most dangerous challenges to all humankind. The situation is compounded by the problems in the region arising from drug addiction, hepatitis and other infections. If timely and effective measures are not taken to prevent its spread, the infection could have a negative impact on the socio-economic situation of the country.

The Government of Turkmenistan has adopted a responsible attitude towards assessing the situation in our country and neighbouring countries, and has taken appropriate action to adopt a comprehensive state-wide approach to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. In 1991, a law was adopted on preventing HIV-related infections. It was revised in 2001 and a new law was adopted on preventing diseases caused by HIV. In order to implement that comprehensive approach to preventing the disease, we have formulated a national programme for the prevention of HIV/AIDS for 2005-2010. We have established an interdepartmental coordinating committee, which includes representatives of more than 29 ministries and departments, local executive authorities, and public and international organizations.

In order to implement the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, our Government has drafted a national plan for monitoring and assessing measures to counteract the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Turkmenistan, which includes a plan for financing the preventive programme to 2010. The Ministry of Public Health and the medical industry have endorsed a provision on the categories of the population that should be screened for HIV. Donated blood undergoes mandatory testing for HIV. An AIDS prevention service has been established, including one national and five regional AIDS prevention centres.

Within our national programme, prevention events are widely held among all categories of the population. We regularly hold informational and educational events that include components covering information, training, the introduction of new techniques, and the drafting and distribution of information materials for various categories of employees and various age and social groups of the population. Since we attach great importance to diagnosing HIV, all laboratories are given testing systems to carry out the necessary research. AIDS prevention centres, counselling services for women, centres for reproductive health, and dermatological and venereal disease clinics provide anonymous treatment and condoms.

The effectiveness of our national programme is enhanced by our ongoing cooperation with the United Nations and its agencies that are represented in our country, primarily the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. With their assistance, we have opened and equipped a youth centre and a national AIDS prevention centre where prophylactics are provided and measures for awareness-raising among our people on AIDS prevention are implemented. On World AIDS Day, with United Nations assistance, AIDS prevention events are held and a variety of information material is distributed free of charge.

The entire system of measures and interaction at the national level is based on the "Three Ones" approach to providing universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010: one national strategy, one coordinating organ and one system for monitoring and evaluation.

In order to attain the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives set out in the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, we support the need to concentrate the efforts of the world community on expanding scientific research into this problem and to provide effective universal prevention and treatment for people with HIV/AIDS.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines associates itself with the statements made by the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis on behalf of the Caribbean Community and by the Minister of Health of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The theme of this high-level meeting is couched in optimistic terms, asking us to review the progress achieved in our commitments and declarations on HIV/AIDS. Indeed, considerable progress has been made in the struggle against the pandemic, and it is fitting that the international community take stock of our achievements and individual experiences even as we recognize the tremendous challenges that remain ahead of us.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains a low HIV-prevalence country, with an estimated 0.4 per cent prevalence in the general population. Our national strategic plan, which includes a care and treatment programme and a mother-to-child advancement programme, is rapidly increasing our responsiveness and effectiveness in addressing HIV/AIDS.

Forty-six per cent of health centres in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have been equipped for the delivery of counselling and testing services, and a number of HIV rapid-test sites have become operational in the past year. A community-by-community outreach programme has been initiated and has tested hundreds of volunteers to date. A human rights desk has been established to field complaints of HIV-based stigmatization and discrimination, and Government ministries beyond the Ministry of Health — including the Ministries of Youth, Tourism, Education and Social Development — are now involved in a multisectoral strategy and action plan to address HIV/AIDS.

Antiretroviral treatment, which became widespread only in 2003, now reaches 86 per cent of patients with advanced AIDS. Eighty-eight per cent of pregnant women were counselled and tested for infection. Even more encouraging is the fact that 100 per cent of infected children under the age of 15 are receiving treatment and that 100 per cent of public schools currently provide life skills-based HIV/AIDS education, a quadrupling of the number from 2005.

Nonetheless, despite the progress achieved, there are clearly no grounds for complacency, even in States with low HIV prevalence. The data paints a picture of a glass half empty, with preventable and treatable new infections still causing death in every corner of the globe.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is part of a global trend in the feminization of the pandemic, and we are rapidly approaching a 1:1 male-female ratio of new infections. The spread of HIV in our country, which accelerated 12 years ago and reached its zenith in 2004, is still hovering near peak levels.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' survival rate remains unacceptably low. Frankly, our low HIV prevalence may owe something to the fact that many infected persons do not live for a particularly long time, relative to the potential survival rates in developed countries.

Seventy-four per cent of new cases occur in our 20-to-49 year-old demographic, with 3 per cent occurring in persons under the age of 15. Only 10 per cent of the general population has been tested in the past year and knows their results, and, of 15-to-24 year-olds with more than one sexual partner, roughly 40 per cent did not use a condom in their most recent sexual encounter.

Further, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is part of a Caribbean region that has the second highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world. The pandemic is the leading cause of death among young people in the Caribbean, and between 2001 and 2007 an additional 40,000 infections were recorded in the region.

The relative success of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the wider Caribbean and much of the developing world in addressing the heart-rending cases of HIV/AIDS among mothers and children is laudable, but it also begs the question of why we have fallen short in our treatment of other, arguably less sympathetic segments of society. We must be careful not to allow our deeply held moral convictions or entrenched social norms to dissuade us from wholeheartedly and non-judgementally confronting HIV/AIDS wherever it occurs.

The war against HIV/AIDS may soon reach the point of diminishing returns if we do not begin to broaden the battlefield upon which we fight. It is certainly not an innovative insight to note that the places in which AIDS care is weakest are the places where general health care is weakest, or that the places where HIV/AIDS education is poorest are the places where general education is inadequate. We cannot hope for ultimate success by foisting sophisticated HIV/AIDS testing, treatment and education onto underequipped, underfunded and overmatched national health-care systems. The war against HIV/AIDS cannot succeed until the pandemic is addressed holistically within the context of pre-existing national requirements.

In President Kerim's statement at the beginning of this high-level meeting, he correctly identified HIV/AIDS as a development emergency with cross-cutting implications. Speakers over the past three days have highlighted the security, gender, political, economic, human rights and public health dimensions of the pandemic. Our 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS also recognized that "the spread of HIV/AIDS is a cause and consequence of poverty" (resolution 60/262, annex, para. 13). Further, in the context of the current global hunger crisis, it is appropriate to recall the Political Declaration's resolution to integrate food security and nutritional support into the battle against the pandemic.

In the light of the many-sided plan of attack against HIV/AIDS, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines calls for a recommitment in three broad areas if we are to consolidate our progress and turn the tide on that human catastrophe.

First, it is critical that we increase global funding for HIV/AIDS well beyond current levels and without bureaucratic income preconditions that cost lives unnecessarily.

Secondly, we must strive to achieve further reductions in the cost of testing, care and treatment of those infected by HIV/AIDS — from the price of laboratory supplies to the cost of second-level antiretroviral drugs, the expense of which remains an unacceptable barrier to long-term survival. In that regard, we strongly endorse the calls made by other States to fully capitalize on the flexibilities within the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights for public health purposes.

Thirdly, we call again for increases in official development assistance up to and beyond the oft-cited 0.7 per cent of gross national income, particularly in the areas of health infrastructure, education and poverty alleviation. The long-unfulfilled promises relating to official development assistance remain a significant blot on the credibility of the developed world and belie many of the commitments and declarations emanating from this body.

Finally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines applauds the Group of 77 and China, the Republic of Cuba and other States that have used this forum to discuss a vaccine and a cure to the pandemic. With the rapid pace of globalization, ever-increasing travel and the unpredictability of human interaction, an HIV infection anywhere is a threat to health everywhere. It is only with a cure that we can discuss, with finality, the progress achieved against that global emergency.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of India.

Mr. Sen (India): I would like to thank you, Sir, for presiding over this high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS.

India recognizes that political commitment is essential to combating HIV/AIDS. Our national council on AIDS is chaired by the Prime Minister and the State councils are chaired by the Chief Ministers. That political commitment at the highest levels has been critical in containing the epidemic. India has a low adult HIV prevalence of 0.36 per cent, and it is therefore estimated that the HIV-positive population is between 2 and 3.1 million. Enormous efforts are being made to contain and roll back the epidemic.

The national AIDS control programme in India works on the basis that prevention is better than cure. It is committed to ensuring universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, and 75 per cent of its budget is allocated to the execution of preventive services, particularly among groups with high-risk behaviour. Voluntary blood collection has increased, and the capacity of blood banks to screen out infected blood is continuously being strengthened. Treatment of sexually transmitted infections is accorded high priority and a target of treating 10 million cases has been set.

Our data collection capabilities have increased manifold. In a country of India's size and diversity, that has been essential in mapping the geographical spread of the epidemic and in identifying the demographic parameters of the epidemic.

Counselling and testing services, which started in a few centres in 2000, are now provided in nearly 5,000 facilities. Testing increased more than sixfold in two years, with 7 million persons tested last year. An additional 3 million women in the antenatal period were tested under the prevention of parent-to-child transmission programme. That scaling up of testing facilities has resulted in the detection of 1 million HIV infections. It is planned to further increase the number of tests by 300 per cent in the next five years and to bring it to 22 million annually by 2012. Those counselling and testing services are provided free to all Indians, a practical example of our commitment to universal access.

The Government of India recognizes that the stigmatization and discrimination associated with the disease can be as bad as the physical suffering. A comprehensive communication strategy on HIV/AIDS, developed by the Government, addresses that issue along with the classical prevention aspects. Special attention is being given to youth and women, who are often the worst sufferers. An adolescent education programme covers more than 100,000 schools.

The Red Ribbon Express Train was launched in December 2007 and will cover 180 stations and over 50,000 villages over a year. Efforts to promote an enabling environment and to reduce societal discrimination of persons infected with HIV and their families are being made involving civil society, political leadership, workers at the grass-roots level, self-help groups and others. A Government policy document on gender equality and a draft law on AIDS that will, among other things, address those issues are being finalized.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that "it is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver". In accordance with that philosophy, in the face of resource constraints and competing priorities, the Government of India is committed to ensuring that no Indian dies of AIDS because of lack of treatment. One hundred and forty thousand of our citizens are currently receiving antiretroviral therapy and treatment for opportunistic infections. Blood monitoring services to determine when HIV-positive persons might require treatment are also provided free. Again in the face of resource and capacity constraints, we are also trying to make available second-line drugs.

I would like to compliment President Kerim on his active efforts to involve civil society in the proceedings of this event. The informal civil society hearing was remarkable in the diversity and the personal commitment of the participants to the battle against HIV/AIDS. In India, the Government has actively involved civil society in the war against HIV/AIDS, with 764 non-governmental organizations enlisted by the national AIDS control programme to deliver targeted interventions.

Although HIV/AIDS has yet to find its Edward Jenner or Jonas Salk, antiretroviral medications ensure that AIDS patients can live. My delegation is therefore perturbed by paragraph 38 of the Secretary-General's report (A/62/780), in which it is noted that only 30 per cent of those who needed antiretrovirals were receiving those drugs. We are even more perturbed by paragraph 41 of the report, which states that those shortfalls are expected to continue.

I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the Indian experience in producing antiretroviral drugs. For the same amount of money that would provide 20,000 rich patients in developing countries with branded and patented medicines, Indian pharmaceutical companies can provide generic antiretroviral drugs to 2 million patients in those countries. Not only are Indian generic retroviral drugs 100 times cheaper than their Western counterparts, they are also more suited to the special needs of the developing world, besides being far more effective than those produced in the developed world. Our companies and research have produced a unique triple antiretroviral drug, as well as paediatric formulations, that make life far easier for patients.

I would like to endorse President Kerim's view that addressing the interconnected problems of HIV/AIDS, climate change, extreme poverty, hunger, sustainable development and rising food prices is a moral and political imperative of our time. Thanks to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), intellectual property rights are in the private domain and the monopolistic pricing of seeds and other inputs exacerbates the problem of food insecurity and high food prices. That increases malnutrition and the malnourished population. To fight climate change, adaptation and mitigation technologies need to be available at affordable rates and, again, TRIPS is a barrier. Global warming would increase and make disease vectors more widespread.

Finally, many of those who survive those two would perish because they cannot afford medicines, again thanks to TRIPS. They would not even be left with affordable traditional herbs, thanks to biopiracy and patenting and a refusal to act on the Convention on Biodiversity at the negotiations in the World Trade Organization in Geneva. Professor Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize winner, in his book *Making Globalization Work*, therefore accurately states that TRIPS was the death warrant for thousands of people in the poorest countries of the world. High prices also reduce the welfare of consumers in developed countries.

The General Assembly, given its universality and convening power, can discuss and give directions on that vital issue. It is not necessary to be so radical as to try to reopen the whole of TRIPS — we are not saying that — but it is, at least, necessary to make the public health exception simple and effective and to have similar exceptions for seeds and climate change. Section 5 in TRIPS on compulsory licensing was a problem because Article 31 (f) restricted it to the domestic market, and that was a problem for countries that do not have domestic generic manufacturing capacity.

World Trade Organization document WT/L/540 waives Article 31 (f) but takes away with the right hand what it gives with the left. The current procedure — and I will not spell it out, as it is in the circulated version of this speech — is far too cumbersome, and that is why no country has been able to make use of that so-called public health exception. It is important for those countries that have domestic generic manufacturing capability to use all the flexibilities in TRIPS. Indian law has done that. Some pharmaceutical companies challenged that in the Indian High Court but failed. Hopefully, affordable drugs for the benefit of all will continue to be produced by Indian manufacturers.

HIV/AIDS needs a vaccine like those that terminated the threat of polio and smallpox, as delegations before me have said, including the last delegation. India is at the forefront of global efforts to develop such a vaccine. Indian research institutes, such as the National AIDS Research Institute, the Tuberculosis Research Centre and the All India Institute for Medical Sciences, are engaged in clinical evaluations and trials of vaccines. A prototype of candidate vaccine, based on DNA/MVA, has also been developed for HIV-1 subtype C at the All India Institute for Medical Sciences. It is our hope that those combined efforts will lead in a few years to the relegation of AIDS, like the Black Death, to the realm of history and nursery rhymes.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Andorra.

Mr. Font-Rossell (Andorra) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I should like to thank the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and all its partners for convening this meeting, which aims to evaluate the progress made in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It is important to emphasize the unwavering and noteworthy work undertaken by UNAIDS and its partners in the field.

I wish also to pay tribute to the important work of the Secretary-General, who, in his annual report (A/62/780), describes the development of the HIV/AIDS situation. It must be acknowledged that the spread of the epidemic has slowed. Indeed, we note that access to treatment has markedly improved, allowing us to see a decrease in the annual rate of new infections and a significant drop in the annual number of deaths caused by AIDS.

The international community is undertaking a series of actions to combat the scourge that has threatened us now for more than 25 years. The 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS of 2006 are only two examples that attest to international awareness and the intense struggle that we are waging together to address the epidemic.

The scientific reports confirm that it is now possible to curb the advance of HIV/AIDS. The goal is thus to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support. Even though significant progress has been made, it is vital to continue our efforts, for HIV/AIDS is a disease that knows no economic or social boundaries and that affects all population groups, regardless of age, sex, social level, culture or country of origin. We must remain vigilant about the problem and strive to achieve our objective for 2015.

The results set out in the annual report illustrate the terrible situation besetting sub-Saharan Africa. That region recorded the greatest number of deaths caused by HIV/AIDS in 2006 and 2007, and has the greatest number of persons affected by the disease. We need to find a remedy to this urgent situation and we urge all to pursue their efforts to focus international financial aid on that region.

The moment has come to focus some of our efforts on finding lasting, long-term solutions that will allow us to follow up on the progress made until we totally exterminate the disease. Prevention should be the cornerstone of our activities. The protection of our children and of future generations should be the primary motivation for keeping our attention focused.

As I have stated, HIV/AIDS affects all societies, including Andorra. In 2005, Andorra established a national plan centred chiefly on information and the prevention of HIV/AIDS among adolescents and young adults. The national UNICEF committee in the Principality, implementing the recommendations of the United Nations on special care for AIDS, developed a programme of action on prevention for young people, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and the Family. That project primarily involves promoting information, consciousness-raising and prevention in order to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS among young adolescents.

Further, the project has several specific goals. First, in the area of education, we seek to promote good habits, instilling a sense of responsibility in individuals so that they can acquire essential knowledge, attitudes and habits. Secondly, we strive to instil a sense of responsibility in young people, preparing them to adopt a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Thirdly, we seek to involve young people in executing prevention programmes. Fourthly, we are working to end prejudices arising from the misinformation and lack of knowledge that engender attitudes that marginalize those suffering from the illness.

In order to reach out to the greatest number of young adolescents, the Government of Andorra has decided to work with groups of youth trainers. Thus, specific training has been organized for personnel in contact with young people in sports settings, leisure centres, parents' associations and, of course, schools.

Andorra is deeply committed to international cooperation to fight HIV/AIDS. Apart from its traditional contribution to the funds and programmes of UNAIDS, Andorra has over the past three years funded four projects of cooperation for development in countries of sub-Saharan Africa. My Government attaches great importance to the project set up in Cameroon, in cooperation with UNICEF, the purpose of which is to provide psychological and social support for children who have been made orphans by or are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

This meeting should allow us to understand and assess the new challenges raised by HIV/AIDS around the world. The vigorous mobilization of the international community to fight one of the major causes of death on the planet must be tirelessly maintained. We must make use of the experience acquired and build on our substantial successes in seeking to eradicate the most significant pandemic of modern times.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Tuvalu.

Mr. Pita (Tuvalu): I am speaking on behalf of the Minister of Health of Tuvalu, who is not able to attend this important meeting due to his prior commitments.

Let me first join previous speakers in congratulating the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General on their joint efforts and able leadership in convening this timely and important high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS.

Let me also align myself with the statement delivered by the Minister of the Republic of the Marshall Islands on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States and the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations on behalf of the least developed countries.

Tuvalu welcomes the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/62/780) on the progress made on the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The progress in response to HIV is evident in many regions, reflecting a return on the substantial investments made to date. However, progress remains uneven.

Despite its small size and remoteness, Tuvalu has not been spared from the effects of HIV/AIDS. In 1995, the islands recorded their first case of HIV, and since then a total of 10 cases have been confirmed. With a small population of only 10,000 people, that translates into one of the highest per capita rates of HIV in the Pacific region.

To respond to HIV, the Ministry of Health of Tuvalu, in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), formed the Tuvalu National AIDS Committee, which combines the efforts of key Government departments, NGOs, community-based organizations and civil society, in order to work together towards halting the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted infections in Tuvalu. The Committee has been very successful in achieving a coordinated multisectoral response to HIV.

In response to the heightened concern about Tuvalu's vulnerability to the HIV epidemic, a comprehensive national HIV and AIDS strategy for the period 2008-2012 has been developed by the Tuvalu National AIDS Committee and is now the platform for a stronger response to HIV.

In the midst of all our efforts to contain and stop the spread of HIV in Tuvalu, there are areas of concern that constrain the progress of work towards achieving our goals. Tuvalu started treating HIV patients in-country at the end of 2007. However, the diagnostics and monitoring of patients on antiretroviral drugs remain a great challenge for our patients. Confirmatory testing is still not readily available in-country, let alone CD4 and viral load monitoring. Requests for these tests are still being sent to reference laboratories within the Pacific region, with an average turnaround time of two to four weeks.

Lack of diagnostics for opportunistic infections is also a problem for Tuvalu. It remains a great challenge, particularly if we are to offer people living with HIV in our country the full range of treatment.

Tuvalu remains committed to creating policies that enable psychosocial support and opportunities for social and economic reintegration in order to assist in addressing vulnerabilities at the community level. In addition, sustainable financial support for national HIV programmes remains a pivotal component of any strategy to combat HIV. The Government of Tuvalu has committed to allocate in its recurrent annual budget a lump sum to support HIV treatment and procurement of antiretroviral drugs.

Tuvalu welcomes the continuous support and assistance of the Global Fund, the United Nations agencies and other donor agencies within the Pacific region that are instrumental in supporting national plans in the priority areas of management, treatment, care and support, surveillance, blood safety and diagnostics. It is important for those mechanisms to continue to allow for sustainable technical and financial support to small island States like Tuvalu. Whilst progress has been made in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Tuvalu, recent increases in food prices and in the cost of oil are expected to have an impact on the sustainability of national HIV/AIDS programmes.

A more pressing issue that is of grave concern to the Government of Tuvalu is the effects of climate change on health. Tuvalu is one of the small island developing States most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, especially the sea-level rise. However, the effects of climate change on health alone are considered to be far more acute and have the potential to seriously undermine the very existence of our people and our country. In that context, it is vitally important that due consideration be given to addressing and including climate change, the current global food crisis and oil costs in the framework of HIV/AIDS programmes.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm my Government's commitment to achieving the goals set out by the 2001 General Assembly at its twenty-sixth special session. Tuvalu is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and has made good progress at this point halfway towards the target date of 2015.

However, Tuvalu still needs the ongoing assistance of regional and international organizations in providing the technical and financial assistance and support required for the development and implementation of its targeted programmes on HIV/AIDS. Let us continue to work together in our fight to combat the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): I am privileged as the head of the Papua New Guinea delegation to deliver this statement on the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in our country.

Papua New Guinea also associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of the Marshall Islands on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States.

Papua New Guinea became the fourth country in the Asia Pacific region to declare a generalized HIV epidemic after the prevalence rate of HIV among antenatal women exceeded 1 per cent in 2002. An accumulative total of 6,469 people were reported to have been infected among the general population of about 5.4 million. At the end of 2006, a total of 18,484 people were confirmed HIV-positive. The male-to-female ratio was about one to one. The mode of transmission of HIV in Papua New Guinea is predominantly unprotected heterosexual intercourse. That is followed by mother-to-child transmission and a few cases through men having sex with men.

In December 2007, the national prevalence rate was projected at 1.61 per cent, with a total 56,175 people living with the virus. The sex/age distribution of HIV cases is, unfortunately, concentrated in young people between the ages of 15 and 29. That age group accounts for 64 per cent of all reported cases, and notably, in that age group, girls account for two thirds of the total. Interestingly, males dominate in the older age group of 35-to-49 years.

The Government of Papua New Guinea has taken the lead in the national response to the epidemic. In 1997, the National AIDS Council was established under an act of Parliament, with its main function being the national coordinating authority on HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea. In 1999, the Government approved the medium-term plan on HIV/AIDS, which has now been superseded by the national strategic plan on HIV/AIDS for the period 2006-2010. In 2000, 20 provincial AIDS committees were established. In 2003, our national Parliament adopted the HIV/AIDS Management and Prevention Act, which addresses human rights principles on stigmatization and discrimination, confidentiality, testing and criminalizing the intentional transmission of HIV.

In 2004, the Government incorporated the Millennium Development Goals in its medium-term development strategy and, in so doing, stressed HIV/AIDS as a development issue and not just a public health issue. The Government also made addressing HIV/AIDS one of its priority expenditure areas for the next five years. The Government and Parliament also established a parliamentary committee on HIV/AIDS.

Papua New Guinea has applied the "Three Ones" principle of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). There are one national multisectoral plan, which in Papua New Guinea is reflected in our national strategic plan; one coordinating authority, which in Papua New Guinea is reflected through the National AIDS Council and its secretariat; and one monitoring and evaluation system, which in our country is represented through the monitoring and evaluation framework of the national strategic plan.

The challenge now is making those three existing principles work for a comprehensive Papua New Guinea response. The comprehensive efforts towards achieving a multisectoral national response to HIV/AIDS are of critical importance. That means that the sectors involved in the response will have to be mobilized in the country to work together. At this stage, that is best exemplified by the strong leadership provided by the Catholic and Anglican churches. By "sectors", we mean that public, private and civil society organizations must work together to address HIV both in the workplace and within families. People living with the virus have come forward and formed associations in some of our provinces and established a network of HIV-positive people, which is now gaining the support of many of our provincial Governments.

However, for a multisectoral response to be feasible, sector-based coordination mechanisms need to be developed. In that regard, the business coalition against HIV coordinates the response of the private sector, while the Papua New Guinea Alliance of Civil Society Organizations coordinates the response of civil society. In addition, the National Joint Coordinating Committee, which is being worked on, will represent the public sector, while the provincial AIDS committees represent the response of our 20 provinces. Other non-governmental organizations, such as Igat Hope, provide the mechanism to sustain the network of HIV-positive people in that response.

Papua New Guinea has begun to respond to the new global strategy of scaling up towards universal access. Greater emphasis is now being placed on the scaling up of treatment, prevention, care and support, and monitoring and surveillance. Papua New Guinea completed its country report pursuant to the recommendations of the General Assembly special session, which was delivered to UNAIDS in Geneva on 30 January 2008.

The country report entails the following scaling up activities. The national prevention strategy, which is in the final stages of its drafting, incorporates high-risk settings; behavioural change activities with youths, both in school and out of school; marginalized populations and high-risk groups, such as sex workers, men who have sex with men; addressing the gender issues, in particular family and sexual violence; and the empowerment of women.

In order for the response to be effective, there has to be a strong political will. The Government of Papua New Guinea has taken that step by setting an enabling legal and policy framework. A new development has arisen in the form of a leadership strategy that will guide the response by leaders in all sectors and at all levels of our society. Programmes are now being developed to sensitize political leaders, bureaucrats and civil society leaders on HIV/AIDS issues and the socio-economic impacts.

The national Government has honoured its commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS with an increased funding allocation to the national AIDS secretariat from 7 million kina, which is about $2 million, in 2006, to 18 million kina, which is about $6 million, in 2007.

In terms of treatment, there are significant efforts being undertaken to scale up care and treatment services throughout the country. Those efforts are being supported by our national development partners. In 2005, Papua New Guinea received a $29-million grant from the Global Fund for five years to support care and treatment. As of March 2007, there were about 27,000 people receiving testing and counselling, compared to 3,052 in 2006, with the number of accredited voluntary counselling and testing centres reaching 62. In 2007, the National Department of Health introduced provider-initiated testing and counselling with a view to scaling up HIV testing in the health sector countrywide.

With the recent introduction of an antiretroviral treatment programme, the issue of the supply of drugs has been discussed with the Department of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Clinton Foundation. In order to scale up an uninterrupted drug supply, service at delivery points is crucial. The procurement supply management systems need much improvement. All drugs for adults and children are procured through the Global Fund and the Clinton Foundation for drugs for children. Ninety per cent of the total number of patients is on the first-line drug treatment regime, while 15 are on the second-line regime. In addition, Papua New Guinea will be using the modules provided by WHO.

Treatment is currently free until 2010. Thereafter, it will be paid for by patients. Fortunately, the Clinton Foundation — and we are grateful to it — has given its commitment to subsidize the cost of treatment.

A prevention of mother-to-child transmission programme has also commenced in seven of our 20 provinces. In 2004, the programme saw a total of 20,000 pregnant women access its services. The coverage of the programme fell from 3.48 per cent in 2006 to 2.32 per cent in 2007 due to programme repositioning by the National AIDS Council secretariat to the National Department of Health. That will again require a lot of attention in the scaling-up process.

The Government recognizes the need to address HIV/AIDS with gender-based approaches. One development has been the launching of a national gender policy to guide efforts to integrate gender issues into the HIV/AIDS response. That area still requires a lot of work, as gender-related issues are so prevalent.

The Government also recognizes that in order to understand the epidemic in Papua New Guinea and take action that is evidence-based, it must be guided by scientific and social behavioural research. In 2007, a national research agenda meeting was convened to guide research-based or evidence-based responses in the country. The national research agenda document takes stock of past research on HIV/AIDS, placing emphasis on research gaps to guide our interventions.

While monitoring and evaluation were done in a minimal way through small projects, it is critical that a national monitoring and evaluation system be set up to enable us to appreciate the level of the response and understand the trends of the epidemic.

The monitoring and evaluation process has been supported by UNAIDS, the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID) and the Asian Development Bank to strengthen the data collection, collation, flow, storage and dissemination processes in the Health Department and the National AIDS Council secretariat. Coordination of monitoring and evaluation efforts is also done at the provincial levels. The surveillance system will need to be improved if we are to understand the level of the epidemic in Papua New Guinea.

The programme activities and efforts undertaken by a host of stakeholders on the ground have been enormous, and it would be remiss of me not to mention our development partners on the ground, who are greatly assisting in the response. They include AusAID; United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, UNAIDS, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and WHO; the Clinton Foundation; the Global Fund; the European Union; the Asian Development Bank; the World Bank; the United States Agency for International Development; New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency; and other international non-governmental organizations, such as Save the Children and Family Health International, to name but a few.

The Development Partners Forum coordinated by UNAIDS in Papua New Guinea provides an avenue for partners to convene discussions around the focus areas of the one plan that they are committing resources towards. For scaling-up efforts to be improved, enhanced cooperation at the level of donor partners is crucial, and it must be encouraged by Governments in countries in order to avoid duplication of resources and operating in isolation. That model of cooperation is working well for us in Papua New Guinea.

Lastly, on behalf of my Government, I wish to thank the United Nations and its agencies for the assistance it has given to Papua New Guinea. That includes, in many instances, the rest of the Pacific region, which has specific vulnerabilities that will determine the varying responses to HIV/AIDS while expanding on the lessons learned from other countries.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy) (*spoke in French*): Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

(*spoke in English*)

We recognize the inalienable human rights of people affected by HIV/AIDS. Women, girls and children are particularly subject to stigmatization and discrimination as a result of the disease, and our fight against HIV/AIDS must include a vigorous defence of their rights.

Italy is committed to the fight against epidemics, in particular HIV/AIDS, through action at home, support for the competent international organizations and bilateral projects in the countries where those diseases are most widespread.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in my country began in 1982. The rate of infections and mortality rose until 1995. Last year, we had fewer than 200 AIDS-related deaths. Italy's national programme includes measures for prevention, treatment and support, as well as research into developing vaccines. One of those is already being tested in Italy and in South Africa.

At the international level, Italy supports the action of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. We are among the founders of the Global Fund, and from the outset we have demonstrated our confidence in that innovative instrument, which has helped to save millions of lives over the years. We have contributed €790 million to the Fund and were among the first to deliver our contribution — €130 million — for 2008. We will allot an equivalent sum, if not more, in 2009 and 2010. We believe in the Global Fund, in its special structure as a public/private partnership and in its composition, which includes communities affected by the disease, civil society and public and private donors. As proof of our confidence, we have always included representatives of civil society in our delegation to the Fund's Board.

Together with WHO, Italy has launched a joint initiative to fight HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, to which we contributed €12 million between 2002 and 2008. We have also promoted a parallel initiative to monitor tuberculosis in general and AIDS-related tuberculosis in particular, to which we have contributed €6 million. The purpose of that capacity-building initiative is to maximize the use of Global Fund resources to improve the performance of local health-care personnel and help build a functioning partnership at the country level. At the same time, we have entered into bilateral agreements with several countries in the region to help implement national programmes to monitor HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

We renew our commitment to the target of attaining universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention, care and support by 2010, and of achieving Millennium Development Goal 6. Italy will make the fight against epidemics one of its central themes while holding the presidency of the G-8 next year. We are open to new ideas from all of the advocacy groups and civil society as a whole in order to update, if necessary, specific targets during our term. We have already heard many important and useful testimonies during this meeting, particularly the call for action of former President Sampaio of Portugal.

We must pay special attention to the situation of women in the framework of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. To an increasing extent, it is vital to support programmes focused on sexual and reproductive health. It is vital to prevent violence against women. It is vital to foster the greatest possible inclusiveness in health care. It is vital to promote growing awareness of the issue among men, women and young people.

Attention must be paid to strengthening health-care systems, without which no action against epidemics can be effective. HIV/AIDS can no longer be treated as an emergency. The response to the epidemic should be fully integrated into national health-care systems. Strengthening those systems means making them more efficient, helping them to better ensure the care and treatment of the whole population and enabling them to retain their health-care workers.

The recent food crisis, the rise in oil prices and climate change have significant repercussions on the fight against HIV/AIDS. Italy is deeply engaged in food assistance. We must work towards finding a solution to the food crisis, which will also guarantee the right to food of people affected by HIV/AIDS and assure the effectiveness of antiretroviral therapy.

Universal access by 2010 is an ambition that we must honour, together with the targets set for 2015. The world expects no less of us. In that endeavour, Italy will continue to do its part.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde.

Mr. Lima (Cape Verde) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the African Group.

Above all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this important meeting and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his excellent report (A/62/780), which sets out many of the activities in which we have been successful and those that remain essential to achieving our goals in this long and painful struggle against the AIDS pandemic. The outstanding work done by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS may be cited as a model and deserves our full recognition.

The implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS of 2001 and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS of 2006 has ensured real progress in the worldwide fight against AIDS. The world has tackled a tremendous task in order to slow, reduce and roll back that dreadful world scourge, which has cost to date more than 25 million lives, especially among young people and women. Men and women everywhere are struggling and striving to extricate the disease from their lives. In Africa, where the virus seems to have grabbed everyone by the throat, the struggle is ongoing. It has been a long, dark night, but the day is dawning.

We therefore do not wish to wallow in the negative results that can be seen here and there. Let us be positive with regard to the issue of AIDS. Let us be enterprising and let us, above all, retain our hope, because it is our only source of strength when we are affected by AIDS and become its victims.

Since independence, Cape Verde has made health one of its main development pillars. In 1975, we had the worst health indicators in the subregion, and today we can say that we now have the best. Notwithstanding those achievements, we are aware that the challenge is still huge, in particular because of the country's vulnerability.

Since the diagnosis of the first case of AIDS in our country in 1986, Cape Verde has mobilized its efforts to confront the epidemic. In 1989, the first national seroprevalence survey was carried out, showing a national prevalence rate of 0.46 per cent among those between 15 and 55 years of age. From the outset, the Government of Cape Verde has regarded combating HIV/AIDS as one of its greatest priorities, and it has been able to draw on the invaluable support of major international partners, in particular France, the European Union, the World Bank, the GTZ of Germany, the United Nations system and, most recently, the Brazilian Government and the Clinton Foundation, among others. Without such fundamental support, Cape Verde would not be able to remain in the category of countries having a low prevalence of AIDS, that is, less than 1 per cent.

Likewise, the decision to introduce antiretroviral treatment in 2004 would not have been possible without international support. Since 2002, a multisectoral strategic plan has been implemented to cover the period 2002-2006, with the definition of a single policy framework, a single coordinating authority — the Committee for the Coordination of the Fight against AIDS, chaired by the Prime Minister — and a single system of monitoring and evaluation, in keeping with the internationally agreed principle of the "Three Ones". Thanks to $9 million in loans from the World Bank in April 2002, that multisectoral plan reached cruising speed in 2004. At the midterm review, it was determined to be very satisfactory.

Cape Verde now belongs to the group of African countries that have most successfully carried out the fight against AIDS. Significant progress has been made in the implementation phase, most notably with the official launching of services providing antiretroviral therapy. More than 150 patients are being treated through that scheme. Cape Verde society has been mobilized to a great extent through the multisectoral programme for the fight against AIDS. A number of epidemiological studies and social/behavioural surveys have been undertaken to achieve a better understanding of the epidemic through an exemplary partnership between the Committee for the Coordination of the Fight against AIDS, public institutions, the ministries, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and community associations.

The cross-cutting and decentralized approach taken in implementing the multisectoral programme to combat AIDS are important assets in our struggle against AIDS in Cape Verde. We must work to preserve and consolidate this widely hailed progress in order to prevent a tragic reversal of our achievements. The evolution of our struggle against AIDS has led to the establishment of the first support group for HIV-positive people in Cape Verde. We have also noted the voices of HIV-positive people making themselves known in society as they claim their rights as citizens, a process that will strengthen the fight against that scourge in our country.

Bearing in mind the nature of AIDS, its many facets and the fact that it is both a public health problem and a social, economic and human rights problem, it is important to avoid any delays at this stage. Cape Verde strives to act in a manner commensurate with the challenges that we face in the area of consolidating the institutional framework established thus far, preserving social mobilization and maintaining the commitment of Cape Verdians to providing universal access to prevention measures and care. We must also provide sustainable universal access for patients to treatment and care.

Conscious of the need to diversify our funding sources, we have undertaken efforts in the area of forming partnerships and of drafting specific proposals, which have not always evoked the desired response from the international community. Cape Verde will have to guarantee the funding necessary for the multisectoral programme to combat AIDS, without which all the gains made thus far could be jeopardized. The country's economic and social vulnerability must be taken into account so that Cape Verde's access to global funds is jeopardized precisely because it has made judicious use of the funds provided to it and has a very low prevalence of the disease in the country. Indeed, without the support of the international community, the results achieved in controlling the epidemic may be jeopardized and there may be a serious reversal in the containment of the disease.

We want to contribute to the struggle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic within our continent, Africa, and show the international community that it is possible for Africans to overcome the challenge of controlling the disease.

In conclusion, we would insist that, without support, Cape Verde will not have enough resources to successfully continue its fight against AIDS. The World Bank's financing comes to an end at the end of this year, and successive requests to the Global Fund have not yet yielded results. If our candidacy for the eighth cycle of the Global Fund is not successful, Cape Verde will be forced into a difficult situation, because we have no way of maintaining our programmes for prevention and care for patients.

Like other political representatives today, we would like to say that we as Africans will be and are capable of dealing with AIDS. As has often been stated here recently, "yes, we can". We, the victims of AIDS in Africa, are empowered to say, "yes, we can". But I believe that we, the peoples of the world, can also state, in the light of the results that we have already achieved, "yes, we can".

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of Bolivia.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As representative of the Bolivian Government, I am particularly honoured to be able to offer, on behalf of my Government, some thoughts in this meeting to review the progress achieved in implementing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

With the signing of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS by Member States at the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly, held from 25 to 27 June 2001, Bolivia, as one of the countries undertaking the commitment, embarked on a process of response to the epidemic with alternating periods of stagnation and significant progress.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Our response began timidly and was marked by a slow response, with a strong component of misinformation, stigmatization, discrimination and lack of proper care, chiefly to the detriment of the country's most vulnerable population groups, which represented lost opportunities to launch a methodical and systematic process of epidemiological studies, follow-up and monitoring in our efforts to control the epidemic. However, in the past two years, the country launched a new process of management based on the General Plan for Social and Economic Development for a worthy, sovereign and productive Bolivia. That came about as a result of the firm resolve of the Bolivian State under its new leadership, led in the health sector by the Ministry of Health and Sports through a national programme on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

That cross-cutting health plan, as part of the national development plan, rests on four fundamental pillars of health policy: the strengthening of management; the promotion of health; implementation of the model of traditional medicine, and family and community health; and social mobilization.

On the basis of those principles, the most significant achievements in the national response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has been made a priority, include strategic regulation, clinical therapy, techniques and management, guidelines that regulate and provide for the possibility of significant improvements in the provision of services.

That resolute political decision of the State is reflected in the adoption of a prevention and protection law for persons living with HIV/AIDS, enacted in 2007, as well as in ministerial resolutions that clearly define the rights of vulnerable groups with sexual differences. With regard to human rights, those groups are succeeding in claiming their legitimate right not to be discriminated against, stigmatized or marginalized in receiving fair and equal support. The regulations also establish universal care, including for internal and external migrant groups, making it possible to eliminate border barriers, reflected in the fact that there is no restriction on entry to the country for carriers of the virus.

On the basis of a commitment to continuous support, the country, through the national treasury, has also begun a process of increasing financial contributions so as to act in synergy with external cooperation and gradually to succeed in providing comprehensive care for those affected by guaranteeing medication, psychological and nutritional support, as well as other inputs. However, it is also clear that the results are insufficient to roll back the epidemic any time soon.

The prevention component in the health policy, with its more comprehensive approach to the promotion of health, has yielded positive results with the active participation of key players, such as civil society, and bilateral, multilateral and Government organizations, making it possible to pursue a sustained promotion and prevention plan in the field of health, not only to educate the population but also to provide good living conditions and to enhance survival and the quality of life, chiefly of the groups most affected.

The President took the Chair.

Having the greatest ethnic, cultural and multilingual diversity in the Latin American and Caribbean region, Bolivia needs a more complex approach to enhance health promotion and prevention in rural sectors, especially where the inhabitants are indigenous peoples, which represent 60 per cent of the total population of the country. Precisely because of the principles that guide our health policies, it has become essential to enable that sector of the population to achieve a low rate of prevalence of the disease and thereby avoid a possible expansion of the epidemic.

In conclusion, allow me to affirm Bolivia's resolute commitment to continuing the fight to roll back the HIV/AIDS epidemic by means of intensive preventive and promotional activities with the purpose of significantly reducing the indicators in the affected population.

The President: I now give the floor to the chairman of the delegation of Samoa.

Mr. Elisaia (Samoa): HIV/AIDS is a catastrophic pandemic, causing chaos and untold suffering worldwide. Its reach is global and, to date, unstoppable. It has no respect for national borders or Government sovereignty. Its victims are selected indiscriminately. Born and unborn babies are robbed of their youth, girls and boys of their adulthood, women and men of their productive lives, their dignity and their worth, and countries are dispossessed of their valuable human assets.

Looking back, despite man's best efforts to date, an end to that human tragedy remains a distant reality and an elusive goal. The question is whether we can win the war on HIV/AIDS. Samoa believes we can, and we should.

This is a timely stock-taking meeting — an opportune reality check for the world to gauge progress made at this juncture and the road ahead. The conclusions of the meeting are clear, and the verdict unanimous. Although there has been progress in access to HIV care and treatment services for women and children, achieving the target of universal access by 2010 remains untenable for most countries. The gap between commitments and results on universal access by the target date are at best uneven, and at worst unmet. Clearly but sadly, diplomatic rhetoric has not been matched by actual commitments on the ground.

With about 34 million people infected with HIV/AIDS in 2007, over 50 per cent of whom are women and children, some 2.5 million new infections and an estimated 2.1 million deaths from AIDS-related diseases, those staggering but sobering statistics underscore the enormity of that dreadful disease. More frightening still is the realization that most people living with HIV/AIDS remain unaware that they are infected.

Women and girls, through no fault of their own, bear the brunt of the epidemic due to their biological and social vulnerability to HIV infection. While services to prevent mother-to-child transmission have increased and improved, they remain largely inadequate.

The goal of universal access by 2010 can be achieved through an integrated approach led by strong leadership with the requisite political support, but universal access in itself provides no comfort to victims without the means of obtaining the drugs and treatment required. The overriding objective should be accessibility and affordability. Both should be part and parcel of the same objective, as one will be ineffective without the other.

However, drugs and treatment at affordable prices are only one of the building blocks. To be effective and sustainable, they must be cushioned and supported by prevention education, strengthened health-care systems with enhanced capacity, increased new and predictable resources, and ongoing research and development in a culture of tolerance and understanding where denial of the existence of AIDS and the discrimination against and stigmatization of victims should no longer be the norm.

That is probably a lot to ask, but the consequences of continuing with the status quo makes it imperative for the United Nations community to come together to find the solution to a global health crisis that has claimed millions of precious and innocent lives. To postpone action for another day is both immoral and not an option. We owe it to the millions of blameless victims worldwide who are too sick and helpless to advocate for their rights — yes, their rights — that we act decisively now, with passion and conviction.

Closer to home, Samoa aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Minister of Health of the Marshall Islands on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States. Regionally and nationally, we are committed to addressing the AIDS epidemic within the constraints of our limited resources and our cultural and religious upbringing, which can pose both challenges and opportunities.

Despite our region's remoteness from the concentrated centres of HIV/AIDS, the disease has already reached our shores and its presence has already been felt. We are no longer immune and cannot pretend otherwise. Some would conveniently want us to believe that because our island countries are small and the number of cases of HIV-infected persons is few, HIV/AIDS is therefore not a major threat to our region.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Both in relative and absolute terms, HIV/AIDS poses a major challenge to our islands and to our region's viability and continued existence. In Samoa's case, of the 16 people infected with AIDS, eight regrettably have succumbed to the disease, with eight currently receiving treatment. One has publicly declared her HIV status and is now a regional AIDS ambassador.

The incidence of HIV/AIDS in Samoa is low, a true blessing when compared to other developing countries, but that is no cause for complacency. AIDS is an emerging issue, and if it is not contained or eliminated successfully, it could undermine our Government's attempt to address poverty alleviation and other Millennium Development Goals.

Samoa has opted for a partnership approach involving the Government, civil society, non-governmental organizations, village councils and religious denominations in view of a coordinated effort to address all aspects of creating an HIV/AIDS-free Samoa. We accept that we must come to grips with that reality, which cannot be simply wished away. We are realists and we know that we need to work collaboratively with other Pacific countries, as well as with our development partners, if we are to succeed. Only through strong partnerships can we address in a holistic and sustained manner the interwoven issues related to human rights principles, access to treatment, voluntary counselling and testing, education on sexuality, prevention methodologies and dedicated resources, so that a sustained and heightened response to HIV and AIDS may be ensured.

We have to be attentive and vigilant. We need to continue to be proactive and leave nothing to chance. The cost of prevention pales significantly in comparison to the human pain, untold suffering and the associated costs to the wider community of caring for someone once infected.

Too much is at stake. Precious lives are at stake. Individually and jointly, we can make a difference.

The President: I now give the floor to Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): In the light of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, adopted by the General Assembly on 2 June 2006, I would like to report on the commitment of the Holy See and its various bodies around the world to addressing those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

The Holy See, through the Good Samaritan Foundation, an organization founded for the purpose of giving immediate economic assistance to medical institutions, has provided approximately $500,000 for the purchase of antiretroviral medicine.

At the national level, the bishops' conferences have developed and promoted greater awareness and programmes to assist in the struggle against the pandemic, especially in developing countries and among the most marginalized populations. For example, in India alone, more than 100 centres that offer treatment, care and support to AIDS patients have been put in place. Soon, in addition to those institutions, another 45 centres will open in rural and isolated areas. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, through its Catholic Relief Services, supports approximately 250 projects in the poorest countries, a figure that in 2007 amounted to over $120 million in assistance.

At the international level, the Holy See, through its various institutions, is present on all continents of the world, providing education, treatment, care and support regardless of race, nationality or creed. With the assistance of 10,000 workers and volunteers, they have reached almost 4 million people with awareness-raising and life-saving education programmes. Further, they provide medical and nutritional care and support to almost 350,000 people living with HIV/AIDS and antiretroviral treatment to over 90,000 men, women and children. One third of that assistance is provided completely free of charge.

We are also acutely aware that a significant number of deaths of those infected by HIV/AIDS are a result of HIV/AIDS-related infections and diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria. In that regard, we support and encourage all those who focus upon and work to reduce the number of tuberculosis infections and the devastating effects of malaria. Often those diseases go unnoticed and treatments are underfunded. Greater efforts must be made to address them.

Finally, the Holy See and its various institutions continue to support greater access to affordable, reliable and life-saving HIV testing, antiretroviral treatment, preventative mother-to-child drug regimens and diagnostic technologies, such as CD4 testing devices. Along with access to basic health care and sustainable nutrition, those technological advancements can slowly close the gap between what is possible and what is necessary.

We come here today to review our progress, but more importantly, we must renew our commitment to taking necessary life-saving action. The Holy See and its various organizations remain committed to address the pandemic in a caring and compassionate manner in order to encourage greater solidarity with all members of our society and to promote the inherent dignity of the human person in all areas of life.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I call on the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Adugna (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): When the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was agreed at the special session of the General Assembly on HIV in June 2001, the volunteers of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were specifically acknowledged in paragraph 34 of the Commitment. I will make this contribution to this important debate with that reference in mind.

That acknowledgement spurred the International Federation to take additional steps to increase the outreach and effectiveness of the contribution of volunteers. That has included advocacy directed at donors to appreciate the cost-effectiveness of investing in recruitment, training and proper support of volunteers, along with work with Government partners to ensure that an enabling volunteer environment maximizes their contribution at the national level.

Some academics have recently asserted that a significant share of HIV funding should be redirected to health sector strengthening. The debate only arises because HIV advocates have been so effective in pushing donors and Governments to deliver on their promises to respond effectively to HIV/AIDS.

To that end, the International Federation has collaborated with the World Health Organization to produce eight training modules for training both volunteers and ministry of health-paid outreach workers on various aspects of prevention, treatment, care and support. Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies and ministries of health have already collaborated successfully in a number of countries to adapt those modules and to train staff and volunteers together.

Of particular concern are initiatives that move us further away from fulfilling the Commitment. The International Federation is convinced that moves to criminalize the transmission of HIV are unnecessary and counterproductive. All experience and evidence show that efforts should instead be invested in reviewing legislation that feeds stigmatization and social exclusion, including travel and employment restrictions on people living with HIV, to ensure that they can be effective partners in our work.

Mobilizing the power of humanity is at the heart of the International Federation's approach to HIV. Alongside that, the commitment of all States and national societies to work together for humanity was launched at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2007. "Together for humanity" means, among other things, making use of the comparative advantage of the Red Cross and Red Crescent capacity to undertake direct action at the community and family levels, while also having access to policymakers. Our Global Alliance on HIV aims to double Red Cross and Red Crescent programming in targeted communities, reaching at least 137 million beneficiaries by 2010. That means dealing with 10 to 20 per cent of the client load in some countries where we work.

As this year's *World Disasters Report*, to be launched on 26 June, explains, in the most affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where prevalence rates reach 20 per cent, development gains are being reversed and life expectancy may be halved. For specific groups of marginalized people — injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men — across the world, HIV rates are on the increase. Yet they often face stigmatization, criminalization and little, if any, access to HIV prevention and treatment services.

The greatest challenge to humanitarian agencies and agencies working for the real forces of development is to find the most effective and efficient means to deliver the greatest impact for vulnerable people. To do that, the International Federation has provided a common framework for scaling up efforts, including standardized outputs, approaches and tracking indicators. Fifty-eight countries are now participating in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Global Alliance on HIV. By 2010, the International Federation estimates that it will be spending 270 million Swiss francs per year on our HIV/AIDS programme. Every dollar of that accelerates greater impact through volunteer mobilization. In southern Africa alone in 2007, the Red Cross mobilized close to 1 million hours of volunteer support.

We in the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent appreciate the tenacity and dedication of civil society advocates in keeping all partners focused on the fulfilment of the promise of our Declaration of Commitment. All of us who are partners in the Commitment must join hands for action and fight on until we overcome the challenge before us, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which remains a serious challenge.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3208 (XXIX) of 11 October 1974, I now call on the observer of the European Community.

Mr. Valenzuela (European Community): I am honoured to speak today at this high-level meeting on behalf of the European Commission. I will try not to repeat here what was already expressed very eloquently in the statement of the European Union.

As many speakers have already stated, it is encouraging to see that our investments of political commitment, financial contributions and years of dedicated community action are paying off, with evidence of progress in many regions. Millions of people are gaining access to treatment, new HIV infections have decreased globally and encouraging progress has been made in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. It is, however, abundantly clear that progress is uneven, major gaps and barriers remain at all levels, and extraordinary efforts are required to achieve the target of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

The biggest challenge is the fact that the AIDS epidemic will not disappear any time soon. It will remain an exceptional global challenge to human security and socio-economic development for decades to come. Those starting on treatment today will be in need of lifelong treatment and the management of HIV/AIDS as a chronic condition will be a long-term task. That challenge will continue to grow, as today two to three people are becoming infected for every one person accessing treatment.

Sustainable and robust country-led responses to HIV/AIDS are the key to our future success and to our efforts to foster resilience at the global, country and community levels to the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic.

Part of the progress made is closely related to the extraordinary, steep increase of financing for AIDS in recent years. However, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/780), the gap between available resources and actual needs is increasing annually. The world will fall short of achieving universal access without a significant increase in the level of resources available for HIV programmes in low- and middle-income countries.

Collectively, the European Union already provides 60 per cent of global development aid and is strongly committed to providing more aid in order to reach the United Nations goal of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) devoted to official development assistance by 2015, with an interim collective European Union target of 0.56 per cent GNI by 2010. At least half of that significant increase will be allocated to Africa, the region most affected by AIDS.

Moreover, the European Union is strongly committed to providing better aid, in accordance with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness on country ownership, donor harmonization and alignment with country priorities and processes. As we approach the Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra in September, and the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in November, the European Commission is working closely with member States to ensure that the European Union will deliver on those commitments for more and better aid.

In line with the Paris Declaration, the European Union is moving from earmarked project financing towards budget support modalities and results orientation, circumstances permitting. That move is critical to strengthening country ownership and providing the fiscal space to strengthen social sectors, for example by allowing countries to invest in such recurrent costs as health worker and teacher salaries. As called for in the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, the Commission and European Union member States are also introducing more predictable financing modalities, notably the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) contract, which will expand the funding commitment to six years and focus on MDG-related results.

Considering the weight of European Union development aid, those new modalities provide great opportunities for the predictable financing of a long-term response to AIDS, which is fully aligned with country priorities and processes. The challenge will be to ensure that partner countries have the political leadership, capacity in planning and management, strong civil society involvement and measures of accountability that are required to make optimal use of those resources and deliver results.

Part of the support for HIV/AIDS will be channelled through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to which the European Union collectively provides 60 per cent of the total contributions. The European Commission has provided a total of €622 million to the Global Fund and pledged an additional €300 million for the period 2008-2010. In our efforts to ensure sustainable country-led responses to AIDS, the European Commission considers it of critical importance to ensure better alignment and integration of the Global Fund and other global health initiatives in efforts to strengthen and transform health, education and social services delivery.

We would not be where we are today if not for the persistent and strong activism of people living with HIV/AIDS and civil society. They have changed the global agenda and made access to treatment a right and a global entitlement.

Respect for human rights is a fundamental common value of the European Union. It is at the core of our move towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. We will have to consistently pursue and broaden the human rights agenda to ensure the right of every human being to a life in health and dignity.

On that note, I would like to conclude by reiterating the strong commitment of the European Commission to the full implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, with the aim of achieving the target of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 and the MDG target of stopping and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I now call on the observer for the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Dall'Oglio (International Organization for Migration): Thank you, Sir, for the honour of participating in this high-level forum today and sharing the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on issues related to the health of migrants and the global HIV response.

There is today increasing international awareness of the linkages between migration and derived health outcomes, including in the context of the HIV pandemic, humanitarian emergencies, food insecurity and climate change. Those are challenging domains that touch on a wide range of issues, including security, social welfare, global access to care and treatment, human rights and the sustainability of health services.

Health is influenced by policies in other domains, and health has, in turn, important effects on the realization of the goals of other sectors. We believe that an open and constructive multisectoral dialogue based on shared and fundamental societal values and principles — such as solidarity, integration, human rights and participation — and sound public health standards can contribute to improving health outcomes for migrants and host communities alike. Therefore, the inclusion of public health, and specifically a consideration of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, health care, counselling and support that avoids stigmatization and discrimination and promotes inclusiveness and global access for migrants and mobile populations, must be advocated within migration policies and practices.

While the large majority of countries have a national AIDS plan, specific measures to address vulnerabilities inherent to the migration process are often lacking. Migrant workers in some parts of the world are often particularly at risk of contracting HIV, and those of undocumented status are even more so. Effectively addressing HIV risks in the context of labour migration and mobility requires the joint effort of multiple parties at origin and destination countries, including Governments, employers, workers' organizations, communities and other social entities representing or working with migrant populations and people living with HIV.

The issue of the mobility of people living with HIV is of significant concern for IOM. The Organization is engaged with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS international task team on HIV-related travel restrictions to address the issue of non-discrimination and non-stigmatization in conjunction with HIV-related travel restrictions. It is hoped that the forthcoming report and recommendations of the task team will be given serious consideration by those Member States that still maintain HIV-specific travel restrictions.

The Global Forum on Migration and Development, to be hosted by the Government of the Philippines this coming October, represents one of the main processes flowing from the high-level dialogue on migration and development of the General Assembly. Its agenda focuses on how migrants can best contribute to development in countries of origin and in host countries when they are protected and empowered socially, economically and in terms of their basic human rights, regardless of their migration status. It is important that HIV/AIDS be included in such deliberations, in Manila and in other regional and international intergovernmental forums, such as the regional consultative processes on migration.

Allow me to conclude by saying that IOM looks forward to continuing to work with Member States and many other partners on issues related to HIV and migration and, more broadly, on migration and health issues for the well-being of migrants and host communities alike.

Addressing the HIV prevention and care needs of migrants improves migrants' health, avoids long-term health and social costs, protects global public health, facilitates integration and, ultimately, contributes to the stabilization of societies and their social and economic development.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Jennings (Inter-Parliamentary Union): Over the past two days as we have taken stock of our promises, ambitions and targets, we have heard much about the epidemic that has brought us all to this high-level meeting in New York. Without doubt, an enormous amount has been achieved since we last met here in 2006 and, as we have heard, a huge amount remains to be done if we are to have any chance of meeting the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support by the year 2010. Those whose fate it is to live and work in the most marginalized areas of society continue to be desperately vulnerable to the epidemic.

Rather than elaborate on the details of the global picture, I would like, on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), to say a few words about the role of parliaments in that picture. To some that role may be obvious; to others, it is less so. In that respect, it is noteworthy that the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/780) on the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS makes no reference whatsoever to parliaments or to parliamentarians.

The work carried out in parliaments is fundamental to any successful programme in the field of HIV/AIDS. Every agreement that is forged at the intergovernmental level ends up, sooner or later, on the table of the legislator for debate, possible amendment and adoption. The enabling legislation that is essential to breaking the barriers of prejudice and fear that drive the epidemic is forged in parliament. The budgets that will be devoted to each country's HIV/AIDS programme are tabled and adopted in parliament.

Evidence of parliamentary interest in this major event is to be found in the large number of members of parliament who have joined their national delegations to the high-level meeting. On Monday, before the opening of this meeting, the IPU gathered together more than 100 of the parliamentarians present for a briefing here in the United Nations. After an informative session with senior representatives of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the parliamentarians went on to discuss the question of HIV-related travel restrictions and the need for more enlightened legislation in that field, centred on human rights.

The parliamentarians debated their role in the intergovernmental process and the need to engage, as politicians, with the Political Declaration. Turning to their own institution, they agreed on the need for more leadership by parliamentarians and for more searching examination of how the epidemic is handled within the parliament. That is a contentious area; there are many places in the world where the moral slur of openly declaring one's status can cause a parliamentarian to lose his or her seat at the next elections.

The IPU has given new impetus to its HIV/AIDS activities since the General Assembly's special session on HIV/AIDS in 2001. A small advisory group of qualified parliamentarians has been set up to spearhead the work among the 150 IPU member parliaments. Last year, on the eve of World AIDS Day, the group organized the first ever global parliamentary meeting on HIV/AIDS in Manila. Invaluable support was provided by our partners in UNAIDS and UNDP.

The conclusions of that meeting included a resolve by the parliamentarians, as leaders in society, to do everything possible to break the silence about HIV/AIDS and encourage openness when discussing the epidemic. They agreed to provide strong, informed and committed leadership on HIV prevention and to speak out openly about the need for action to prevent the spread of HIV and to encourage voluntary HIV testing and counselling.

Turning to the question of the affordability and accessibility of treatment for persons living with HIV/AIDS, they said that particular attention should be paid to reforming national intellectual property laws to ensure that the flexibilities of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) are incorporated fully into legislation. For instance, the least developed countries should take advantage of the World Trade Organization Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which exempts them from granting pharmaceutical patents until 2016. Pointing out that bilateral trade agreements sometimes include provisions with more extensive patent protection than that required under TRIPS, they urged parliamentarians in developing countries to discourage their Governments from entering into such agreements.

On the difficult issue of the criminalization of transmission, they declared that before rushing to legislate, parliaments should give careful consideration to the fact that passing HIV-specific criminal legislation can further stigmatize persons living with HIV; provide a disincentive to HIV testing; create a false sense of security among people who are HIV negative; and, rather than assist women by protecting them against HIV infection, impose on them an additional burden and risk of violence or discrimination.

On the subject of stigmatization and discrimination, they resolved to strengthen legislation, regulations and other measures to eliminate discrimination against people living with HIV and members of vulnerable populations, and ensure that those laws be properly enforced. They also agreed to work to eliminate travel restrictions for people living with HIV/AIDS and oppose mandatory HIV testing of immigrants and refugees.

There will be no informed legislation without knowledgeable legislators. The IPU is grateful to its United Nations partners for helping it to promote sound HIV- and AIDS-related laws. There is much ground that has to be covered in the parliamentary sphere, but parliaments are committed to playing their part in that endeavour, and the IPU will do all it can to assist them.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call on the observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Lindal (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): I thank you, Sir, for allowing me to take the floor. I also thank you for your wise guidance as we review our progress on HIV/AIDS at this important midway point for the Millennium Development Goals.

Two years ago, my delegation joined many here in this Hall to issue support for the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. In that document we recognized that, in many parts of the world, the spread of AIDS is a cause and consequence of poverty, and that effectively combating HIV/AIDS is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We also acknowledged that, for the first time in history, we have the means to reverse the global epidemic and to avert millions of needless deaths.

To be effective, we must deliver an intensified and more comprehensive response with much greater urgency, and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta stands as a partner in those global efforts to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and to improve the lives of those already infected.

The percentage of HIV-infected pregnant women receiving antiretroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission increased from 14 per cent in 2005 to 34 per cent in 2007. While that increase in two years is encouraging, sadly children still account for one in six new HIV infections. The Order of Malta seeks to end the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child by providing access to screening, prenatal therapies and drug treatments. For those already suffering, the Order of Malta has established programmes of medical and palliative care. Those programmes are operational in countries in Central and South America, Africa and Asia.

As the Secretary-General's report (A/62/780) suggests, the HIV epidemic requires a sustained, long-term response if it is to be overcome. The Order of Malta strives to administer its humanitarian aid in a fashion that ensures sustainability and also diminishes the causes of need in the first place. A major component of the work of the Order of Malta is not just addressing acute crises as they occur, but helping to create the structures and mechanisms that sustainably blend into communities.

In addition to HIV prevention and treatment, we endeavour to strengthen health systems at large. In accordance with the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, the Order of Malta believes that the HIV/AIDS response must be part of a comprehensive strategy that addresses basic health-care needs. By offering regular health care, we know that many illnesses can be prevented entirely. The health-care paradigm can shift from treating acute problems to prevention. Through the establishment of health-care centres and the provision of vaccines, the Order of Malta is working to that end.

Acute shortages of health-care professionals impede that goal, and we should aim to build the capacity of community-based groups to help members of vulnerable populations get access to essential health and support services. The training of an increased number of health-care workers in the community is an essential element of a sustainable approach. The Order of Malta seeks to alleviate the strain placed upon the few overburdened workers available and to actively engage the population in their own health. The training of local community members in vital health-care tasks is always a priority in even the most remote medical centres of the Order of Malta.

The Order of Malta commends the Secretary-General for bringing particular attention to the problem of joint tuberculosis and HIV infection. Those two epidemics must be addressed together. The Order of Malta has been working for decades to fight the spread of tuberculosis and will continue to expand those projects.

At this midway point to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the Order of Malta recognizes the importance of evaluating the progress made thus far in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We are proud to work in harmony with the States Members of the United Nations to achieve the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it. It will be only through international cooperation and coordination that the scourge can be eliminated.

The President: We have heard the last speaker for this high-level meeting on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

I would first of all thank all the delegations that have come from across the globe to attend this high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS. We have had a rich and engaging debate over the past three days, involving the active participation of Member States and representatives of civil society and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. I would like to briefly highlight some of the key themes that have emerged from our discussions.

First, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a public health as well as a development issue. Some delegations made the point that, in their respective countries, HIV/AIDS is among the biggest threats to their sustained economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. An effective response to the pandemic must therefore become a central feature of all our development efforts. That means that strengthening public health systems, including by stemming the brain drain, must go hand in hand with an effective national strategy to combat HIV/AIDS.

Secondly, an effective response to the pandemic must have human rights and gender equality at its core. The rights of people living with AIDS and of other vulnerable groups must be protected, including women's right to make informed decisions about their sexual health. In that regard, civic education and courageous leadership are critical. Stigmatization and discrimination, including travel restrictions, drive the pandemic underground, from where an effective response becomes impossible.

Thirdly, there must be better access to prevention, treatment and support services, especially for those populations at the greatest risk. As several speakers correctly pointed out, there is no single approach or one-size-fits-all solution. We must therefore have a more comprehensive approach that includes better public education programmes, particularly for young adults. Prevention and treatment must be more accessible to everyone, including drug users, sex workers and sexual minorities, and HIV transmission from mother to child must be eliminated in developing countries, as it has almost been in developed countries.

Fourthly, our response to the pandemic must be inclusive. Governments, community leaders, civil society and other international actors are all part of the same team. Our collective efforts must be joint, complementary and coherent. We must better integrate policies and approaches that address HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and drug use to reflect the multifaceted nature of the pandemic.

The role of the United Nations system, and of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in particular, is critical to that partnership. Several Member States have made the point that the United Nations system must have the capacity to ensure that national efforts are coordinated and complementary so that we can progress steadily to our 2010 universal access target.

Finally, leadership and political accountability are the most important part of the solution. At the highest levels, they are necessary to ensure that enough human and financial resources are allocated to an effective and sustained response. At the community level, effective leadership means knowing your epidemic in order to ensure that local populations understand the realities and consequences of the epidemic. It is therefore particularly important to involve young people as an integral part of the solution, as they have the most to lose.

Before closing the meeting, I would like to convey a special vote of thanks to my two facilitators, Ambassador Tiina Intelmann, the Permanent Representative of Estonia, and Ambassador Samuel Outlule, the former Permanent Representative of Botswana. They have both worked tirelessly over the past seven months to ensure that we were all well prepared for this important meeting.

I would also like to recognize the important contributions of the Civil Society Task Force, especially in facilitating the participation of representatives of civil society who gave voice to the people and communities around the world that experience the everyday reality and impact of HIV/AIDS.

I would also thank Mr. Peter Piot and the entire UNAIDS team for their efforts. Since this is the last time that Mr. Piot will participate as UNAIDS Executive Director, I would like to take this opportunity to commend him for his years of service to global public health. He has been a committed leader and has helped shape UNAIDS into an organization that is equal to the challenge of fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In the coming weeks, I shall issue a comprehensive summary of this high-level meeting. The summary will reflect the views expressed during all of our discussions. History will judge how effectively we rose to the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

Our global response must continue to be a collective effort. No State or individual organization can succeed alone. Our renewed determination must be matched with accelerated fulfilment of our commitments to achieve universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and support by 2010.

We must not lose the momentum of our global response. For every two people who begin HIV treatment, there are five new HIV/AIDS infections. I thank everyone for their participation and attention.

The General Assembly has thus concluded the high-level meeting on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 44?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.109

General Assembly
Sixty-second session
Official Records

109th plenary meeting

Friday, 20 June 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 125, 140 to 144, 146 to 156, 161, 164 and 126.

I request Mr. Steven Ssenabulya Nkayivu of Uganda, Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, to introduce in one intervention the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly.

Mr. Nkayivu (Uganda) (Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee): I have the honour today to present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee containing recommendations on issues that require action during the second part of the resumed sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

In the course of the second part of the resumed session, which took place between 5 May and 13 June 2008, the Fifth Committee held 15 formal meetings, as well as numerous informal meetings and informal consultations. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/233 of 23 December 1994, the second part of the resumed session of the Fifth Committee was devoted primarily to considering the financing of United Nations peacekeeping missions and associated peacekeeping issues. The Committee considered the financing of 18 peacekeeping missions, related peacekeeping items and other issues.

With regard to sub-item (a), entitled "United Nations peacekeeping operations", of agenda item 125, entitled "Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/62/534/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

In paragraph 13 of its report under agenda item 140, entitled "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations", which is contained in document A/62/600/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of three draft resolutions. Draft resolution I is entitled "Support account for peacekeeping operations", draft resolution II is entitled "Financing of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy" and draft resolution III is entitled "Reformed procedures for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment". In paragraph 14 of the same report, the Committee also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of an oral draft decision entitled "Use of 300-series and 100-series appointments". All the draft resolutions and the decision were adopted without a vote.

With regard to the draft proposals on the financing of peacekeeping operations, I should like to inform the General Assembly that, with the exception

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

of sub-item (b), entitled "United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon", of agenda item 153, entitled "Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East", the Committee adopted all the draft proposals without a vote.

The reports of the Fifth Committee are presented under the following agenda items: 141, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi"; 142, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire"; 143, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus"; 144, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo"; 146, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor"; 147, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste"; 148, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea"; 149, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia"; 150, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti"; 151, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo"; 152, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in Liberia"; sub-item (a), entitled "United Nations Disengagement Observer Force", of item 153, entitled "Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East"; 154, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone"; 155, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan"; 156, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara"; 161, entitled "Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur"; and 164, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad".

With regard to sub-item (b), entitled "United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon", of agenda item 153, entitled "Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/62/878. With regard to the draft resolution recommended by the Committee to the General Assembly for adoption, the Committee decided to retain the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 4, 5 and 21 by a single recorded vote of 74 in favour, 4 against and 45 abstentions. In paragraph 14 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution as a whole, which was adopted in the Committee by a recorded vote of 124 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention.

Under agenda item 126, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Procurement reform", which the Committee adopted without a vote. Under the same agenda item, in paragraph 15 of document A/62/604/Add.2, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft decision entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration", which the Committee adopted without a vote.

Before I conclude, allow me again to thank delegations for their cooperation in the conduct of negotiations. I would also like to thank Ambassador Hamidon Ali, Chairman of the Fifth Committee, for the way in which he guided us through our difficult work. I should also like to thank the members of the Bureau, with whom it was, as always, a pleasure to work. On behalf of all of us, I would also like to express our profound thanks to the representatives of the Secretariat — and especially the secretariat of the Fifth Committee — for their cooperation, patience and support.

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote is different from its vote in the Committee".

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless notified otherwise in advance. That means that where separate or recorded votes were taken, we will do the same. I should also hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Fifth Committee.

Agenda item 125 (*continued*)

Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/534/Add.1)

The Acting President: The General Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/233 B).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 125.

Agenda item 140 (*continued*)

Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/600/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it three draft resolutions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 13 of its report, as well as a draft decision recommended by the Committee in paragraph 14 of the same report. We will now take a decision on draft resolutions I to III and on the one draft decision.

Draft resolution I is entitled "Support account for peacekeeping operations". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 62/250).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Financing of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 62/251).

The Acting President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Reformed procedures for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 62/252).

The Acting President: The draft decision is entitled "Use of 300-series and 100-series appointments". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 140.

Agenda item 141

Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/866)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. We will now take action on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/253).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 141.

Agenda item 142

Financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/867)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/254).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 142.

Agenda item 143

Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/868)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/255).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 143.

Agenda item 144

Financing of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/869)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/256).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 144.

Agenda item 146

Financing of the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/870)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/257).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 146.

Agenda item 147

Financing of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/871)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/258).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 147.

Agenda item 148

Financing of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/872)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The

Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

> *The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 62/259).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 148.

Agenda item 149

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/873)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

> *The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 62/260).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 149.

Agenda item 150

Financing of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/874)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

> *The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 62/261).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 150.

Agenda item 151

Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/875)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

> *The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 62/262).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 151.

Agenda item 152

Financing of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/876)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

> *The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 62/263).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 152.

Agenda item 153

Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East

(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/877)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the United Nations

Disengagement Observer Force". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/264).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 153.

(b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/878)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 14 of its report. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon".

A single separate vote has been requested on the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 4, 5 and 21 of the draft resolution. Is there any objection to that request? There is none. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 4, 5 and 21 were retained by 90 votes to 4, with 45 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Malta and Slovenia advised the Secretariat that they had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President: I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution as a whole. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Australia.

The draft resolution as a whole was adopted by 142 votes to 2, with 1 abstention (resolution 62/265).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Malta advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote following the voting.

Mr. Diab (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation joined in the consensus adoption of the resolution entitled "Financing of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force". We also voted in favour of the resolution entitled "Financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon". We did so on the basis of a principle that we have always emphasized, namely, that the responsibility for financing those two missions must be borne by Israel, the aggressor and occupying Power responsible for the establishment of those operations. Our position is in line with the general principles enshrined in resolution 1874 (S-IV), adopted on 27 June 1963 during the fourth special session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 153.

Agenda item 154

Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/879)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/266).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 154.

Agenda item 155

Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/880)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report. The Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/267).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 155.

Agenda item 156

Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/881)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

We will now take action on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/268).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 156.

Agenda item 161 (*continued*)

Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/601/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. We will now take action on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/232 B).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 161.

Agenda item 164 (*continued*)

Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/602/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report. We will now take action on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/233 B).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 164.

Agenda item 126 (*continued*)

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/62/604/Add.2)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 14 of its report, as well as a draft decision recommended by the Committee in paragraph 15 of the same report. We will now take action on the draft resolution and the draft decision.

The draft resolution is entitled "Procurement reform". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/269).

The Acting President: The draft decision is entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 126. The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Fifth Committee before it.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(c) Election of five members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission

The Acting President: Members will recall that, in accordance with paragraph 4 (a) to (e) of General Assembly resolution 60/180 of 20 December 2005, the Organizational Committee shall comprise the following: seven members of the Security Council, including permanent members; seven members of the Economic and Social Council, elected from regional groups; five top providers of assessed contributions to United Nations budgets and of voluntary contributions to United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, including a standing peacebuilding fund; five top providers of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions; and seven additional members elected by the General Assembly, giving due consideration to representation from all regional groups in the overall composition of the Committee.

Members will further recall that, at its 82nd plenary meeting, on 16 May 2006, the General Assembly elected Burundi, Chile, Egypt, El Salvador and Fiji as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a term of office of two years, which expires on 22 June 2008.

It is my understanding that consultations are still ongoing among the regional groups regarding the election by the Assembly for membership in the Committee. As an interim measure, and with the hope that a solution can be found soon, the President of the General Assembly has proposed extending until 11 July 2008 the term of office of the current members of the Assembly on the Committee that is due to expire on 22 June 2008.

In that connection, I also wish to inform members that by today's date, the terms of the current members of the troop-contributing countries are also extended to 11 July 2008.

I understand that the Economic and Social Council has taken similar action concerning its current members of the Organizational Committee.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly as an interim measure to extend the terms of office of the current members of the Assembly on the Organizational Committee — Burundi, Chile, Egypt, El Salvador and Fiji — to 11 July 2008?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bahamas.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): I have the honour of making this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, which has actively participated in the ongoing consultations concerning the composition of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission. We thank the President of the General Assembly and his Office for all their efforts in that regard, and while we welcome this decision as an interim accommodation, we must state unequivocally that it does not address the fundamental concerns of the Latin American and Caribbean Group regarding the composition and distribution criteria of the Peacebuilding Commission.

After many months of continued discussions, it remains clear to us that the Commission is a body created by the United Nations that does not respond adequately to the principle of equitable geographical distribution. As currently constituted, the Commission stands as an organ primarily for troop and financial donors, and that is not a trend that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States is willing to advance. We are of the conviction that it would be in the best interests of the entire Organization to continue to review the composition of the Peacebuilding Commission with a view to redressing imbalances on a sustainable basis, thus reflecting the reality that the experience and contributions of all regions are valuable to the work of the Commission.

For the Latin American and Caribbean States, the principle of equitable geographical representation is fundamental to the consolidation of universal multilateralism. From the time of its inception and, more recently, in the framework of ongoing consultations, we have continuously defended a balanced representation in the overall composition of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission. We firmly believe that a balanced representation of all regional groups is fundamental to the legitimacy of the body and that the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission would benefit greatly from such a composition.

In that context, the States members of our Group intend to pursue, in consultation and collaboration with the other regional groups, a solid and long-term solution to the challenge of underrepresented regional groups. We reiterate our conviction that this can and should be done through the election of members from within the wider General Assembly, a component of the constituting resolution that was included precisely for the purpose of balancing the general composition of this Commission. That continues to be our interpretation of sub-item (e) of operative paragraph 4 of resolution 60/180.

Once again, on behalf of the States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, I thank President Kerim for his guidance and assistance in bringing us to this critical point, where the only option is one of forward movement. We look forward to working with him and all Member States in a spirit of cooperation and mutual support in finding a lasting and equitable solution for regional representation on the

Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 113.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/62/L.25/Rev.2)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Rovirosa (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the sponsoring countries Belarus, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Venezuela and Mexico, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/62/L.25/Rev.2, entitled "Global Forum on Migration and Development".

The draft resolution takes into consideration, among other elements, the fact that the summary of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held in 2006, underlined the close link among migration, development and human rights, as well as that respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants was essential for taking advantage of the positive aspects of international migration.

The draft resolution stresses the need to promote a comprehensive and coherent discussion on all aspects of the phenomenon of migration, taking into account its importance on the global agenda.

It also recalls that Member States participating in the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development expressed interest in continuing the dialogue on migration and supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to create a global forum to address, in depth and in a systematic manner, all topics related to international migration and development. In that sense, it recognizes that the Global Forum on Migration and Development should be strengthened with the aim of addressing the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development with a comprehensive approach.

In paragraph 1, it recognizes that exchanges of information and expertise, consultation and closer cooperation between the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the United Nations could have a positive impact and, in that regard, proposes a series of measures to be taken.

In paragraph 2, it welcomes the inclusion of the topic of the human rights of migrants in the Forum's agenda.

I would like to point out that in the Chinese and English versions of the draft resolution, there is a mistake in the third preambular paragraph. The subject of resolution 62/156 should read "protection of migrants" instead of "protection of migrant workers".

The draft resolution on which we are taking action today has been the subject of four open-ended consultative processes and a significant number of consultations in other formats since December 2007. The differences between the original version, in document A/62/L.25, and the revised version speak for themselves and show the enormous flexibility and political will of the sponsors in addressing all concerns. On that basis, we invite all delegations to support the draft resolution.

I would now like to make some remarks in my national capacity. The issue of migration is of unquestionable historical relevance and has become a topic of major importance in the context of globalization. It is evident that, in a significant number of cases, the current composition of our societies is indissociably connected to historical and current migratory flows. A clear example of that is the western hemisphere, which, from North to South, is made up of societies that are the product of various migratory flows originating from every region. These are mixed societies on several different levels. Mexico is proud of its mixed heritage.

Migration enriches our societies, rendering them more diverse and pluralistic, encouraging the exchange and evolution of ideas. In conjunction with the implementation of adequate policies, we can advance towards creating more tolerant, open, universal and, above all, humane communities. As sponsors of the draft resolution, we believe in the capacity of the United Nations to reach that objective.

In addition, regarding the topic of development, the receiving countries benefit from migratory flows that complement their need for skilled and unskilled labour. That is particularly relevant in societies whose demographic structure does not guarantee growth or the maintenance of their current economic standards. On the other hand, in the countries of origin, diaspora communities generally play a relevant role within the economic structure.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that migration poses a number of important challenges. Those challenges are serious and varied. There are concerns regarding security; economic consequences, such as the loss of human capital from developing countries; and social consequences, such as the disintegration of the family.

In the vast majority of cases, migrants' only intention is to secure a better future for themselves and their families, even at the cost of risking their lives, leaving their homes, cultures and language, only to then encounter foreign and, in some cases, hostile environments. In that regard, tendencies to criminalize the most vulnerable populations are particularly alarming.

My delegation considers that cooperation and dialogue among all stakeholders involved in migration — including, inter alia, Governments, specialized agencies, civil society and the private sector — are essential if we are to take full advantage of the potential benefits of migration, consistently facing the challenges posed by the various aspects of the issue through an integrated and multidimensional approach.

That approach should take into consideration above all that migration is not about the flow of goods or resources, but about human beings, who cannot be handled or managed in a mechanical way. It is therefore indispensable to keep human beings and the need to decisively guarantee the protection of human rights and dignity at the core of our considerations. The fight against racism and xenophobia and the defence of all the rights of migrants, particularly when they constitute a vulnerable population, are essential efforts.

That is in line with the spirit and the letter of the United Nations Charter, as well as its highest values and the agreements reached in various documents within the framework of the Organization. We are aware of the way in which the topic of migration has been addressed within the framework of the United Nations in recent years and we embrace that accumulated knowledge.

Allow me to explain the main factors that motivated us in presenting this draft resolution. The first was our commitment to multilateralism and our trust in the United Nations as the most democratic and representative international organization, as it promotes open and honest dialogue among Member States as partners for development. The second was our commitment to the universal and non-selective protection of human rights, including those of migrants, regardless of their migratory status.

In that context, we believe that the Global Forum on Migration and Development proposed by the Secretary-General can provide a privileged space for a full and coherent discussion of all the topics related to international migration and development. In that regard, the draft resolution recognizes that, although the United Nations and the Forum are of different natures, closer cooperation between the two could have a positive impact in addressing the topic of migration.

The draft resolution also sends a clear message that discussions on migration cannot exclude the human component, and it therefore welcomes the inclusion of the topic of human rights in the agenda of the second session of the Forum.

On the eve of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and given the current challenges in this area to which we all are witness on an almost daily basis, we believe it crucial to point out that full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants is a sine qua non condition for taking advantage of the positive aspects of international migration. We believe that, in addressing the topic of migration, human beings should be at the centre of our discussions.

For Mexico, supporting this draft resolution means supporting an integrated approach to the topic of migration, taking into account human beings; it means supporting a more effective multilateralism and the role that the United Nations can play in the search for solutions to the challenges we face. We are convinced of the great value of the work of the United Nations and the benefits that can be reaped from it in other forums. No matter now difficult an issue might be, the United Nations has an historical role to play in its treatment. Supporting the draft resolution is an additional step in our commitment to creating more tolerant, open, universal and, above all, humane communities.

The Acting President: We will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/62/L.25/Rev.2, as orally corrected. In connection with the draft resolution, I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Kelley (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to inform members that, under the terms of paragraph 1 (b) of draft resolution A/62/L.25/Rev.2, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to include in his report, called for in resolution 61/208, an evaluation of the existing cooperation mechanisms on migration and development and to make it available to the second meeting of the Global Forum.

It is recalled in this connection that the programme budget implication statement, contained in document A/C.5/62/19, was issued in December 2007 in response to the request in paragraph 1 (a) of draft resolution A/62/L.25 to present at the second meeting of the Global Forum, to be held in Manila, an evaluation of the existing cooperation mechanisms on migration and development.

It is further recalled that, at its 26th meeting, on 26 December 2007, the Fifth Committee, having considered the statement of programme budget implications submitted by the Secretary-General and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, decided to inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/62/L.25, additional requirements of $110,000 would be met within the overall appropriations under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 and also decided to report thereon in the context of the performance report.

The General Assembly, however, did not adopt draft resolution A/62/L.25 in December 2007. The request in paragraph 1 (b) of draft resolution A/62/L.25/Rev.2 provides for a change from a stand-alone report on the evaluation of existing cooperation mechanisms on migration and development to a part of the regular Secretary-General's report to be submitted by the General Assembly in accordance with its resolution 61/208. That change would also result in the amendment to the programme budget implications contained in the previous programme budget implications statement of draft resolution A/62/L.25 as follows.

The Secretary-General's report requested in resolution 61/208, to be submitted at the sixty-third session, is to be ready by the end of July 2008. Given the short lead time, the evaluation would not be as detailed as originally envisioned in the original programme budget implication statement, contained in document A/C.5/62/19. Therefore, the consultant to carry out the evaluation could be hired for a maximum of one work month at $10,000. That amount would be met from within existing resources under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. The contractual service requirements originally envisaged in document A/C.5/62/19 would no longer apply.

As the requested evaluation would be part of the Secretary-General's report, the additional translation, editing and printing costs would be accommodated within the resources allocated for the preparation of the report. Since the report would be issued as an official United Nations document, it could be distributed to all permanent missions in New York prior to the Global Forum's meeting. Copies of the report could also be delivered by Department for Economic and Social Affairs staff attending the Forum, disseminated electronically and/or reproduced locally.

Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/62/L.25/Rev.2, no additional resources would be required over and above the level of resources approved under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. As the requested evaluation would be part of the already programmed report, no modifications would be required for the programme of work of section 9, Economic and social affairs.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, allow me to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Hagen (United States of America): The United States will vote against this draft resolution because it seeks to link the Global Forum on Migration and Development with the United Nations. The Forum is an independent, intergovernmental process that falls outside of the United Nations system, and we believe that separation should be maintained. We do not see the need for closer cooperation between the Forum and the United Nations, as called for in the draft resolution, nor do we believe that the Secretary-General should be requested to prepare reports for the Forum, as the draft resolution also proposes. The United States believes that follow-up to the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development should appropriately be addressed in the Second Committee of the General Assembly, which has a biennial agenda item on the topic of international migration and development. That item is on the provisional agenda of the Assembly's sixty-third session, and we look forward to a thorough discussion of it this fall.

The United States values international migration and is proud of its strong immigrant tradition. According to United Nations statistics, the United States is home to 20 per cent of the world's migrants. Between 2000 and 2006, over 6 million migrants became legal permanent residents of our country. We believe that those facts speak to the level of opportunity, integration and success that immigrants in the United States enjoy.

United States policy on international migration focuses on the promotion of respect for the human rights of migrants, the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees, opposition to uncontrolled and illegal migration, support for anti-trafficking efforts, and encouragement of the rapid and successful integration of our legal immigrants. The United States believes strongly that orderly migration, when managed effectively, benefits countries of origin and destination, as well as migrants themselves.

Ms. Brown (Canada): Canada will vote against draft resolution A/62/L.25/Rev.2 because we have serious reservations both about its objective and about certain elements of the text. We deeply regret that Mexico and the group of sponsors were not willing to continue with the regular process of open and inclusive informal negotiations on the text in order to address in a satisfactory manner the concerns raised repeatedly by a large number of delegations since the first draft was submitted in December.

Allow me to explain clearly what Canada's position concerning the draft resolution does not reflect. Our position is not a reflection of the importance that Canada attaches to constructive dialogue between States on the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development. Over the past few years, we have witnessed a growing sophistication in the way migration is considered. Linkages between migration and development are being explored in greater depth — an approach that Canada finds valuable. Canada is actively involved in international relations related to migration and development at the bilateral and regional levels, as well as in a variety of multilateral forums, including the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Our position on the draft resolution is not in any way a reflection of the importance we attach to human rights issues. Canada fully supports the protection and the promotion of human rights for all. We hope that all countries participating in the second meeting of the Global Forum, to be held in Manila in October 2008, will come prepared to share information on the practical steps that they have taken in their own countries to advance the issues that will be discussed at the Forum, including the very important question of human rights. Canada considers that the Global Forum on Migration and Development presents an opportunity for constructive, productive dialogue on that subject and for advancing the human rights of migrants through concrete and practical initiatives.

Less than two years ago, after participating in the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the vast majority of countries represented at the High-level Dialogue opted to launch an independent, States-led Global Forum on Migration and Development outside the framework of the United Nations. Canada has been actively involved in those efforts. The Global Forum has an appropriate mechanism for States to consider its direction — the assembly of countries known as the Friends of the Forum, whose responsibility it is to determine the direction of the Global Forum. Given that arrangement, Canada does not believe that a General Assembly draft resolution focused on the Forum is appropriate.

Canada also regrets that the draft resolution does not respect the intergovernmental agreement concerning deliberations on international migration and development that Member States agreed to at the sixty-first session following the High-level Dialogue. In resolution 61/208, the General Assembly decided that possible options for appropriate follow-up to the High-level Dialogue would be considered at its sixty-third session.

Further, Canada supports the efficient and rational management of the General Assembly's work. The General Assembly has a dedicated agenda item on international migration and development, and that is where matters related to international migration and development should be taken up. We trust that the present draft resolution will not become an annual occurrence, resulting in unnecessary duplication of work and of reporting.

In relation to the draft resolution, Canada recalls the remarks of the Secretary-General at the time of the High-level Dialogue: "There is no consensus on making international migration the subject of formal, norm-setting negotiations" (*A/61/PV.3, p. 4*). In the absence of such consensus and in light of the widely differing views on the appropriate role for the United Nations in that area at this time, Canada encourages Member States that wish to further constructive, rather than divisive, dialogue to focus their efforts on the work of the Global Forum in order to develop concrete approaches and practices that further the positive outcomes of international migration and development.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): Indonesia takes the floor to give an explanation of vote before the voting on the draft resolution entitled "Global Forum on Migration and Development", contained in document A/62/L.25/Rev.2.

Indonesia, as a country of emigration, immigration and transit, has always made the issue of migration a top priority of our policy. It is therefore very important to have a common and global framework in the United Nations based on the multidimensional nature of migration that captures the opportunities and tackles the challenges arising from international migration.

At this juncture, it is crucial to maintain a consensus on the draft resolution in support of that important issue, which has also been addressed at the bilateral, regional and global levels, and by international organizations, including within the framework of the United Nations.

Indonesia does not believe that voting is the appropriate decision-making process to resolve the issues surrounding the draft resolution, and we are of the view that voting on the draft resolution would only diminish the basic framework on international migration that we have been working towards. For that reason, we shall abstain in the voting on the draft resolution, which should be adopted by consensus.

Nevertheless, my delegation fully supports all positive measures, such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, that broaden our perspective and provide insight for States Members of the United Nations. While the Forum is an informal and State-led initiative, it can serve as a confidence-building measure to discuss the complex, multidimensional aspects of international migration and development in a systematic and comprehensive way.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.25/Rev.2, entitled "Global Forum on Migration and Development", as orally corrected. Additional sponsors are Bolivia and Venezuela.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Andorra, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Draft resolution A/62/L.25/Rev.2, as orally corrected, was adopted by 86 votes to 2, with 55 abstentions (resolution 62/270).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, I would remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats. I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Cumberbach Miguén (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation wishes first of all to thank the authors of the resolution we have just adopted for their efforts to find common ground for understanding on the complex subject of international migration and its implications for the development of our countries. We were powerfully struck by the double standard with which forums that are organized outside of the United Nations are handled. Some that are used to attack and defame Members of this Organization seem to be favoured, while others that have more noble intentions are rejected when they are not to the liking of some of the most powerful countries of the world.

The current phenomenon of global migration is directly related to the present and unsustainable international economic and political order in which the poor majorities are simply marginalized by the ultra-orthodox logic of the market of neoliberal globalization. It is necessary to consider that subject comprehensively, linking it, above all, to development policies that respond to the structural causes of migration flows in our day.

To criminalize migrants, to militarize or build walls at borders, to adopt laws and resolutions that make it possible to detain migrants for long periods of time without legal guarantees or, worse yet, to politicize the subject of migration, inciting many to migrate illegally in insecure and risky circumstances, do nothing to help the genuine cooperation that is needed in this regard.

Partisan approaches only fuel xenophobia, racism, racial discrimination and prejudices against minorities, and promote the inhuman illegal trafficking in persons. The Cuban delegation hopes that the initiatives on global migration promoted within and outside the framework of the United Nations will contribute to the emergence of solutions that change the structural causes of the phenomenon. If we limit ourselves to formulas to control migration flows, we will merely be postponing the crisis that looms on the horizon.

The beneficiaries of the present world order should reflect and at least act with intelligence and common sense if they do not wish to act with generosity.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I have the honour to take the floor in explanation of my delegation's vote after the voting.

It is the view of Malaysia that the resolution just adopted does not accurately or in a nuanced manner convey how the rights of migrants are to be discussed across the entire migration chain and the role of sending and receiving States alike as duty-bearers at the second meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Manila at the end of this year. We regret that the resolution does not treat all the issues before the Global Forum in an equal manner and with the same emphasis.

It is also the view of my delegation that the overall concept of the resolution creates a bad precedent for involving the United Nations in an essentially independent State-led initiative. As was decided in resolution 61/208, the question of the Global Forum is to be considered as a follow-up to the 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, and that the relationship between the Forum and the United Nations is to be discussed at the upcoming sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

As such, it was premature at this stage for the resolution to have been discussed. We believe that the resolution should not in any way prejudge or be used as a basis of discussions for the negotiations that we are to have at the sixty-third session. Malaysia looks forward to constructive discussions at that time.

It is for the reasons that I have explained that my delegation has abstained in the voting on the resolution.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): It is my honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. On 6 June, the European Union asked for the postponement of the consideration of the agenda item on the Global Forum on Migration and Development. We did so because we believe that, in today's world, marked by globalization and significant demographic change, the dialogue on migration and development has become very important. In that context, the need for a resolution on the Global Forum on Migration and Development that represents the view of the wider membership of the United Nations is even greater; hence the need to strive for a consensual outcome.

In 2006, the topic was addressed at the High-level Dialogue in New York. In the same year, the General Assembly adopted the Second Committee resolution on international migration and development, also mentioned in the resolution considered in today's plenary meeting. It is in that document that States Members of the United Nations agreed to include in the agenda of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly the issue of international migration and development. The European Union believes that the discussion introduced with the item on today's agenda is premature and not in accordance with the will expressed by the General Assembly during its sixty-first session.

The 2006 resolution on international migration and development noted with interest in its preambular part the offer of the Government of Belgium to convene in 2007 a State-led initiative, the Global Forum on Migration and Development. In his address to the Forum, the Secretary-General noted that, "For many years, Member States of our United Nations found it hard to discuss the sensitive issue of migration in the international arena". The importance of the Global Forum is therefore tremendous, as it offers the opportunity for countries to continue the dialogue on migration and development and to contribute to the development of holistic approaches to the issue.

The Forum is a useful tool for the exchange of views and ideas on how to tackle challenges emanating from the nexus between migration and development. The European Union has always been a strong supporter of the Global Forum in the belief that it can bring added value, provided that it is informal, voluntary, non-binding and driven by interested United Nations Member States and participants.

The cooperation between the United Nations and the Forum is through the Secretary-General's Special Representative, which was reaffirmed by the members of the Forum in its guiding principles. Members of the Forum have not agreed on a stronger link and therefore we should not act prematurely, with only one Forum meeting behind us. Rather, we should take advantage of its consultative nature for confidence-building among States and for achieving progress towards better integrating migration as a positive factor in development policies. In the contrary case, we risk jeopardizing a process that brings practical responses to the challenges and opportunities of migration and development.

On 6 June, we expressed our view that the draft resolution presented on that date failed to represent the view of the wider membership of the United Nations. Since then, we have engaged in further informal consultations, which have resulted in the text before us today. The European Union appreciates that the sponsors have incorporated some amendments. Nevertheless, the new resolution presented today does not address all of our concerns. It is for that reason that the European Union abstained in today's voting.

Furthermore, the European Union is of the view that the follow-up to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development should continue to be dealt with in the context of the biennial Second Committee agenda item dedicated to international migration and development.

Mr. Gatan (Philippines): My delegation would like to put on record the simple reason why it abstained in the voting on resolution 62/270. The obvious reason was to demonstrate our neutrality on this polarized issue, as expected of the host of the second meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote.

Several delegations have asked for the floor to make statements after adoption, and I shall call on them now.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 62/270 today because we believe that it will facilitate greater cooperation between the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the United Nations system. As a sponsor of the resolution, Ecuador associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Mexico and wishes to reiterate its traditional position that the analysis and discussion of migration and development being conducted at various levels, in particular multilaterally, should include the issue of the human rights of migrants in all forums, whether by Member States, United Nations bodies, civil society or the private sector, pursuant to the close link among migration, development and human rights that has already been highlighted as a result of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held by the Assembly in September 2006.

Ecuador supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Global Forum examine in depth and systematically all topics related to international migration and development. The Secretary-General emphasized in his report of 18 May 2006 (A/60/871) that, within the United Nations system there is no single entity that examines those subjects systematically.

Following several months of negotiations, the sponsors displayed great flexibility and a spirit of conciliation to achieve consensus on subjects related to the link between the Forum and the United Nations system and the human rights of migrants on the agenda of the Manila meeting. That reflects the commitment of all United Nations Members that consideration of the human rights of migrants should be comprehensive and holistic.

Ecuador believes that the huge interest shown by a number of delegations in the subject before us today demonstrates the need for the link among migration, development and human rights to be discussed and in a systematic and sustained manner in the Assembly; in adopting today's resolution, Member States are thus working in the right direction towards that end.

Ecuador, in co-sponsoring and supporting the resolution, acted consistently with its migration policy at the national and international levels as a country of origin and destination for migration. It suffices to mention that in the Constituent Assembly, which is now preparing a new constitution for Ecuador, we have approved the recognition of universal citizenship, which would entail, among other things, the elimination of tourist visas for the admission into our territory of all citizens of the world.

Ecuador views with concern the fact that, in the context of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — which in article 13 highlights the right of everyone to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State and to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country — the European Parliament has adopted a directive of return, applicable in European Union member States, to residents from third countries residing illegally, by which persons with an illegal status can be imprisoned for a period of between 6 and 12 months if they do not comply with a deportation order 30 days after notification. Those measures are a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of international human rights instruments because they criminalize illegal immigration, which is prohibited under the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Ecuador believes that the penalization of illegal immigration cannot be concealed behind a policy of return because the latter is imposed not by force, but voluntarily in the context of basic respect for human rights and guarantees in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue.

Ecuador regrets that the resolution that we have adopted on a topic that means so much to us all was not adopted by consensus and that some delegations opposed it despite the fact that the issue of migration, from a human rights perspective, is of supreme importance on the global agenda and, as a multilateral topic, falls within the Organization's responsibility.

Ecuador will continue to work towards constructive dialogue on migration without limiting the comprehensive focus on the human rights of migrants and their families, in accordance with the mandate established by our heads of State in the final document of the 2005 World Summit.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Nicaraguan delegation, as a sponsor, associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Mexico. We welcome the adoption of resolution 62/270 on the Global Forum on Migration and Development and are grateful to those who supported us.

At the same time, we regret that some delegations did not support the initiative and remained inflexible throughout a lengthy process of negotiations, in which the sponsors clearly showed flexibility towards reaching consensus. The sponsors were aware of the great need for dialogue on this subject at different levels — particularly at the multilateral level, where it is possible to consider the problems and opportunities presented by migration from a multidimensional perspective — and to adopt measures to protect and promote the human rights of migrants.

The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held in 2006, emphasized the close relationship among migration, development and human rights. For that reason, we believe that any initiative to discuss the issue under that principle will always be welcome. Likewise, we are pleased that the initial proposal of the Secretary-General to create a global forum that would address that issue in depth and systematically has been brought to fruition by the convening of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Brussels in 2007 and its second meeting, to be held in the Philippines this year.

We hope that the adoption of resolution 62/270 will be the beginning of a close and constructive relationship between the Forum and the United Nations as the universal body where the interests of all actors involved converge and where subjects are approached on terms of equality, justice and solidarity so as to ensure that the outcome of discussions is aimed at improving situations and not at favouring a certain group. Far from resolving the problem, addressing the topic of migration with agendas imposed by receiving countries only exacerbates it.

My delegation also wishes to express its concern at the directive of return recently adopted by the European Parliament. In addition to highlighting once again the contradictions of the free market model imposed on our countries, which promotes the mobility of goods and services while opposing the free movement of the human beings who produce those goods and services, the directive violates the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and several articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular article 13, which establishes that "[e]veryone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State".

I would ask the Europeans who came to our America and went to other continents whether they encountered the same restrictions and hostility when they arrived in our lands to take our resources. The directive was drafted without taking into account the contributions that migrations, especially from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa have made to the prosperity of the European Union, making its markets dynamic and correcting the demographic deficit.

Today more than ever, we need to reactivate dialogue among the countries of destination and of origin to promote viable solutions that are respectful of the human rights of migrants and their families. Nicaragua appeals to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa to join the initiatives of all fraternal countries to unite in defence of the human rights of migrants.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivian delegation does not want to make a lengthy statement since most of the concepts that we should have liked to mention have already been put forward by the delegations that sponsored resolution 62/270.

Nonetheless, I want to emphasize that, in the view of the Bolivian delegation, the resolution constitutes one more step in defence of those millions of migrants who find themselves obliged to live in often subhuman conditions — those thousands, indeed millions, of migrants who are obliged to live in secret. Those countries that benefit from the contribution of those millions of migrants are precisely those that simply do not understand that humanity is moving forward. The resolution is yet another step in defence of respect for the human rights of those millions of migrants.

We are delighted that only two countries voted against the resolution because that helps us to see with great hope that even those countries of the European Union that do not yet understand the contribution of those migrants voted in favour of it. We are also quite concerned about decisions taken in the European Parliament this week. We hope that, in spite of those decisions, the European Community will become increasingly aware and take decisions that promote the defence of the human rights of migrants.

Mr. Labbé (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation takes the floor as one of the sponsors of the resolution that has just been adopted.

Chile is a country of immigration. The presidency of the Republic of Chile has been occupied by descendants of Spanish, Swiss, German, French, Italian and English immigrants. Chile is home to the largest community of descendants of Croatians that exists outside of Croatia. Chile is home to the largest community of descendants of Palestinians living outside the Middle East. Last month, the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, welcomed at the Palacio de La Moneda in Santiago 108 new Palestinian immigrants who formerly lived near the border with Iraq and who have become Chilean citizens and been welcomed with open arms.

Chile, which has become a host country for immigration from neighbouring countries, recently enacted a law under which amnesty was granted to over 50,000 illegal immigrants from fraternal countries who have come to our country to seek a better future for themselves and their families.

We understand the importance of the contribution of migration because we have experienced it and are grateful for it. That is why we sponsored today's resolution and voted in favour of it. We see nothing in it that can prejudge the final outcome of the discussions that will be conducted within the United Nations to define forward-looking policies regarding immigration.

We also know that the United Nations and its system rest on three pillars — international security, human rights and development. Immigration has an extremely important role to play in those three pillars. Chile views the problem of immigration in the same way as it views all problems that relate to the human person — from the perspective of the human security paradigm.

The entire United Nations agenda must be seen from the perspective of the inherent dignity of human beings. We are a social organization created by and for the benefit of human beings. Concepts such as dignity and solidarity resound in the collective heart of Chileans in the strongest manner because, at certain dramatic points in our history, we ourselves benefited from solidarity.

We want to call here for a universal vision and for all to approach this phenomenon with generosity because some day, be it in some other court or in some other life or when we have to face our own consciences, we will have to respond to the question: "What have we done for our fellow man?" And we are talking about our fellow man here.

We hope that in the future the force of our reasoning, the importance of the values that we are defending and ultimately the dignity of flesh-and-blood human beings will be taken into account as the backdrop for this entire discussion so that we can feel truly proud of an organization which, I repeat, was created by and for human beings.

Ms. Rovirosa (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I should like to express my thanks to the delegations that supported resolution 62/270.

For my delegation, it was surprising to note that, after almost a year of intensive consultations and efforts to address a subject that is in every way relevant to the United Nations context, some delegations could not muster the political will to adopt the resolution without a vote. My delegation expresses its profound disappointment at the fact that all the sponsors' efforts were not reciprocated.

It is not a question of bringing a new matter before the United Nations; this is a subject that has been debated in the Organization for many years, as delegations emphasized in their explanations of vote. It is a question of complementing the efforts of the international community to promote a comprehensive approach to the matter and, above all, international cooperation in this field.

Migration is a subject that is very relevant to a large number of countries, if not to all Members of the Organization. That is why it is inconceivable that it was not possible to approach the matter on a consensus basis today. My delegation will continue to make every effort to bring the positions closer together, but Mexico will never agree to the Assembly's ignoring the issue.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 116.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.110

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

110th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 8 July 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: request for the inclusion of additional items on the agenda

Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/236)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/237)

The President: The General Assembly will first turn to document A/62/236, relating to the extension of the terms of the ad litem judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991.

In his note, the Secretary-General indicates that the current terms of the ad litem judges of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia come to an end on 23 August 2009. In the absence of a provision of the Statute of the International Tribunal to extend the terms of office of these judges, the approval of the Security Council and of the General Assembly would be needed in order to extend the terms of office of the ad litem judges of the Tribunal until 23 August 2010.

To enable the consideration of this matter, the Secretary-General requests the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-second session of the Assembly of an additional item entitled "Extension of the terms of the ad litem judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991".

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Rogachev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to caution the Assembly against taking a hasty decision on the inclusion of an additional item on the agenda of the sixty-second session of the Assembly, on extension of the terms of the ad litem judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Under rule 15 of the Assembly's rules of procedure, the author of a proposal must justify its important and urgent character for the Assembly to decide to consider it during this concluding portion of its current session.

But we see no such justification in the note of the Secretary-General (A/62/236). Indeed, the note states that the terms of the ad litem judges of the ICTY come to an end only on 23 August 2009. Where, then, is the urgency?

Even considering the desirability — especially for the judges — of a prompt resolution of this matter, we believe that there is plenty of time to consider this issue and to take a well-considered decision. And such a well-considered decision is precisely what we must take, for we do not at present know the deadline for extending the terms of ICTY judges, and this is unlikely to be known during 2008. That is because we

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

do not know exactly how long the Tribunal will be functioning.

As members know, in its resolution 1534 (2004), the Security Council established completion strategies for both tribunals, according to which they must complete all trial activities at first instance by the end of 2008 and complete all appeals by the end of 2010. But the ICTY is already reporting to the Security Council that it will be unable to meet the deadlines that have been set. For the Security Council and the General Assembly to extend the terms of the judges so early would encourage the very policies and practices that have led to this undesirable situation.

The modalities for the future functioning of the tribunals are currently under discussion in the Security Council. Specifically, a mechanism is being developed to define what are being called the residual mechanisms of the tribunals, which will function once those judicial bodies have ceased to exist.

We understand the concerns of the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, because the terms of that body's judges expire at the end of this year, but we see no urgency in the request regarding the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The President of the ICTY cites the need to appoint a number of ad litem judges for hearings that are soon to begin, but we wish to stress that such a decision requires no resolution by either the General Assembly or the Security Council. Such a decision is within the purview of the Secretary-General.

The Security Council has begun to consider these requests, but has not to date achieved consensus. Especially in view of the lack of consensus in the Council, it is not warranted to take a procedural decision to consider this item directly in plenary meeting of the General Assembly, thus bypassing the General Committee.

The President: I call on the representative of Cyprus, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I would like some clarification here from the Secretariat, because it is not very clear to me why this request for an additional item on the agenda came directly to the General Assembly plenary rather than going through the General Committee.

The President: I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): The note by the Secretary-General contains a reference to the urgent character of this item. In adopting the procedure for today's meeting, we considered the note by the Secretary-General, which highlights the urgency of including this item in the agenda. The General Assembly is the master here, because, whenever there is a recommendation by the General Committee, the matter must come before the Assembly.

The President: I call on the representative of Cyprus.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I confess that I am a bit puzzled, because, having read the note — although it mentions the important and urgent character of the item — I do not believe that this is sufficient reason to bypass the General Committee. As the representative of the Russian Federation said, we have ample time. I really do not understand on the basis of which rule this request came directly to the plenary of the General Assembly.

The President: I see the point that the representative of Cyprus has made. As we have already planned a meeting of the General Committee for Thursday, 10 July, we can defer consideration of this matter until that meeting. Does the representative of Cyprus wish to propose that we do so?

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I do indeed propose that the General Committee take up this matter at its Thursday meeting.

The President: I accept that proposal.

Before turning to the request submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/62/237, relating to the extension of the terms of the judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, I must inform the Assembly that the Secretariat has just informed me that we lack a quorum. I propose therefore to defer consideration of this item.

I call on the representative of Saint Lucia.

Mr. St. Aimee (Saint Lucia): I do not believe that we had a quorum when we took a decision on the request relating to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and I would like a clarification as to the status of that decision.

The President: A quorum was not required for that decision: the President can take such a decision, and I decided to refer the matter to the General Committee, based on the proposal by our colleague from Cyprus.

I call on the representative of Cyprus.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I should like to propose that the request for an additional item relating to extension of the terms of the judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda also be taken up by the General Committee on Thursday. There is no fundamental difference between the two issues, so why should we not take this one up in the General Committee as well? We could subsequently come back to the General Assembly.

The President: I think that proposal is appropriate; the two matters are related. I therefore propose that we first discuss them both during the next meeting of the General Committee, on Thursday afternoon, and then come back to the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.111

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

111st plenary meeting

Friday, 11 July 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim . . . . (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Fourth report of the General Committee (A/62/250/Add.3)

The Acting President: In paragraph 2 (a) of the fourth report of the General Committee (A/62/250/Add.3), the Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item entitled "Extension of the terms of the judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994" be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I (Organizational, administrative and other matters).

The representative of Rwanda has requested the floor.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): My delegation appreciates this opportunity to address the States Members of the United Nations on the important issue of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Let me reiterate Rwanda's appreciation for the support given by the international community through the ICTR to arrest and bring to justice perpetrators and leaders of the Rwandan genocide and the efforts to address the impunity that prevailed in Rwanda for a long period, which have also contributed to the reconciliation policy that Rwanda put in place in order to reconstitute a traumatized society.

In June, Rwanda's Prosecutor General, Mr. Martin Ngoga, made a statement to the Security Council highlighting issues concerning the transfer of cases to national jurisdictions, including Rwanda. The statement clearly indicated that Rwanda was prepared to receive cases involving intermediate- and lower-rank accused, as directed by resolution 1503 (2003) when the ICTR winds up.

Rwanda has taken the following steps in order to fulfil its obligations as the aforementioned Security Council resolution directed. As a matter of State responsibility, Rwanda began close consultations with the Tribunal and set the grounds for reserving and conducting trials of some of the cases that may be transferred from the ICTR. A comprehensive piece of legislation was adopted in March 2006 to govern the transfer of cases from the ICTR and any State to Rwanda. The law provides sufficient guarantees for fair trials; it is explicitly based on the ICTR's rules of procedure and evidence, as well as other best practices recognized and applied by the ICTR. The law allows the ICTR to monitor trials and recognize the ICTR's primacy and right to call back transferred cases.

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During the past two years, modern courtrooms have been prepared. Under a joint programme between the ICTR and Rwanda, we have conducted activities to foster familiarity and interaction between the ICTR and Rwanda, including workshops for judges, prosecutors, the bar and staff. A modern holding cell has been constructed in Kigali to accommodate ICTR detainees who will be appearing in the court.

In the same way, an agreement for the transfer of ICTR convicts to Rwanda was signed on 4 March 2008. The agreement is founded on the requirement provided for under the ICTR statute to have sentences imposed by the ICTR be served in Rwanda. We have a modern correctional facility that is intended to accommodate ICTR convicts sent from Arusha, as well as ICTR accused who may eventually be convicted.

Both the prosecution and the Registrar of the Tribunal have conducted a series of visits to Rwanda to verify the country's readiness and willingness to receive the ICTR's outstanding workload. They have expressed their satisfaction with the level of compliance with internationally recognized standards and norms attained by Rwanda's judicial institutions.

Given the efforts that Rwanda has undertaken with the assistance of the international community, my Government wishes to express its frustration with the decision by the judges of the ICTR on the referral of cases to Rwanda, which we believe has influenced the decision to extend their mandate. The Security Council should indeed establish support mechanisms that would bolster Rwanda's efforts to address issues related to post-ICTR residual functions. A mechanism between States Members of the United Nations and the Government of Rwanda that would address the transfer and trade of all remaining ICTR cases, the pursuit of fugitives at large and the monitoring of service of sentences would be most appropriate. With such a mechanism, we could achieve a smooth and effective completion process.

Rwanda views the extension of the mandate of the ICTR judges as contradicting the major efforts that Rwanda has made with the assistance of some Member States. The General Committee should consider deferring the item on the agenda.

The Acting President: The General Assembly currently has before it a recommendation by the General Committee to include this item in the agenda. Therefore, the decision I want to ask the Assembly to take is whether we decide to include this item in the agenda for the current session under the heading I.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In paragraph 2 (b) of the same report, the General Committee further recommends that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

The representative of Rwanda has requested the floor.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): Rwanda has expressed its view on that matter. Its proposal is therefore to defer the matter.

The Acting President: I think we have already decided to include that agenda item. We are therefore now talking about the allocation of the item.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides to consider the item directly in plenary meeting.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Extension of the terms of the judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994" becomes item 168 on the agenda of the current session.

In paragraph 3 of the same report, the General Committee decided to recommend that an item entitled "Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor)" not be included in the agenda of the sixty-second session.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I take the floor for three reasons. First of all, I want to thank the delegations that supported our request for including in the agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly an additional item entitled "Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor)". We are grateful to other members of the General Committee that showed their interest and participated in yesterday's discussion. We have taken note of their approaches, in particular suggestions to include the item in the agenda of the sixty-third session. At the same time, we understand that the reason for yesterday's decision of the General Committee was not due to the substance of the issue, but a prevailing desire to have more time for its thorough consideration. It was no surprise that only one delegation demonstratively spoke against our request.

That brings me to the second reason for my statement. During the current session of the General Assembly, we have used a number of opportunities to bring to the attention of the membership of the United Nations information, including recently declassified archives, shedding light on the mechanisms and specifics of the development of the Holodomor tragedy in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933. Our approach to the problem of Holodomor is based on solid archival documents and eyewitness accounts, not on emotions or the Soviet-style stereotypes demonstrated by our opponents. Ukraine shares the pain of other peoples of the former Soviet Union that suffered from famine in the 1930s. Such feelings have been unequivocally expressed by us on a number of occasions.

At the same time, we cannot but draw the world's attention to the fact that specifically in the Ukrainian case famine was used as a weapon. Imagine a bird being put in a cage and denied food until it died. That is what happened to millions of people in Ukraine, who by military arms were kept from leaving their famine-stricken homes in search of survival. That is why Ukraine categorically rejects attempts to dilute the truth about Holodomor and to question its right to have the tragedy of its people spoken of and recognized in the United Nations. That is an unfair and dangerous approach that challenges the dignity of many millions of victims of crimes committed by the totalitarian Stalin regime and prevents humankind from obtaining knowledge that might help it to avoid similar catastrophes in the future.

Lastly, I want to emphasize that Ukraine is ready to continue efforts that would lead to the widest possible understanding on the question of Holodomor. In a spirit of flexibility, we will not insist on having the issue considered in the current session of the General Assembly. Instead, I would like to express the sincere hope that Holodomor will receive adequate attention during the Assembly's sixty-third session.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to approve the recommendation of the General Committee not to include this item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Rogachev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Now that the General Assembly has taken the important decision to adopt the recommendation of the General Committee, I should like to take this opportunity once again to explain the position of the Russian Federation, which spoke against the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine (Holodomor)".

We objected to that issue being raised because we believe that it is historically, and therefore politically, incorrect. The mass hunger in the territory of the Soviet Union in the 1930s was a tragic chapter in the overall history of the peoples of the Soviet Union. As the Assembly is aware, hunger struck not only Ukraine at the time, but also other parts of the Soviet Union — in particular southern Byelorussia, the Povolzhe region, the Central Black Sea oblast, the Don and Kuban Cossack oblasts, the northern Caucasus, northern Kazakhstan, the southern Urals and western Siberia. At that time, when it was part of Poland, people were also starving in the western part of Ukraine.

The research of Russian historians has proved that the famine in the Soviet Union in the 1930s was simply the result of improper management of the agricultural sector throughout the entire country, and not only in Ukraine. We remember the tragic events that occurred in those years on the territory of the former Soviet Union, but we cannot give preference to the memory of those who suffered in that event in one particular region over that of those in other regions. I believe that, in this case, we are ruled by perfectly understandable human considerations, and nothing else. I need not develop that any further. We believe that it would be improper to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of people who died of hunger throughout the entire Soviet Union to raise the issue at the United Nations while referring solely to one of the regions stricken.

With regard to yesterday's discussion in the General Committee, all delegations that so desired spoke, including those not members of the Committee. We are grateful to the delegations that supported the point of view that there was a need for consensus in this particular case.

It is on that basis that we are prepared to work further. We are open to further talks, first and foremost with the delegation of Ukraine, but also possibly with other delegations that represent independent States that in those years were components of the Soviet Union.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(c) Election of five members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 109th plenary meeting on 20 June 2008, the General Assembly extended to 11 July 2008 the terms of office of the current members of the Assembly on the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission — Burundi, Chile, Egypt, El Salvador and Fiji.

It is my understanding that, to date, consultations are still ongoing among the regional groups regarding the election by the Assembly to membership in the Committee.

As an interim measure, the President of the General Assembly has proposed to extend until 31 December 2008 the terms of office of the current members of the Assembly on the Committee that are due to expire today, Friday, 11 July 2008.

In that connection, I also wish to inform members that, in a letter addressed to the President of the General Assembly dated 10 July 2008, the troop-contributing countries have indicated no objection to the extension of the term of all categories of the current members of the Organizational Committee until the end of December 2008. I understand that the Economic and Social Council has just taken similar action concerning its current members of the Organizational Committee.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, as an interim measure, to further extend the terms of office of the current members of the Assembly on the Organizational Committee — Burundi, Chile, Egypt, El Salvador and Fiji — to 31 December 2008?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 113.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.112

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

112th plenary meeting

Friday, 18 July 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Meeting on the global food and energy crisis

Agenda item 48 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

The President: In connection with agenda item 48, members will recall that, in a letter dated 16 July 2008, I forwarded the revised comprehensive framework for action of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, presented by the Secretary-General.

Statement by the President

The President: The international community is confronted by an alarming and interconnected increase in food and oil prices. Those conditions have been compounded by the unpredictable effects of climate change and a depressed world economy. The potential social consequences are extremely grave.

The United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report* identifies food insecurity, together with water stress, rising sea levels, exposure to climate disasters and environmental degradation as the key transmission mechanisms through which climate change could reverse human development.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the rise in food and oil prices could severely weaken the economies of up to 75 developing countries, so that the prospect of stagflation — slowing growth and rising inflation and unemployment — is real for many. The World Bank estimates that rising food and fuel costs could reduce the gross domestic products of 40 to 50 countries by 3 to 10 per cent, pushing at least 100 million people into poverty.

The global food and energy crisis therefore requires an immediate, coherent and coordinated response, with the United Nations system playing a central role. When the Secretary-General briefed Member States in June, he pleaded for the continued support of the General Assembly in dealing with those pressing issues.

On various occasions, Member States have underlined the need for the General Assembly to take concrete steps to tackle the food and energy crisis. Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council's 2008 Ministerial Declaration calls for urgent individual and collective action to stem the impact of the crisis and put the global economy on a more sustainable footing.

The comprehensive framework for action before us today provides a coherent and coordinated strategy for doing so. I would therefore like to commend the Secretary-General for taking the initiative and recognizing the need for prompt and coordinated global action.

Just as we have dealt with climate change at this session, we must now apply the full, continuous and high-level commitment of all Member States to the food and energy crisis. While dealing with the dramatic

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effects of these crises, we must use this opportunity to inject new life — a new deal — into the multilateral system.

Since the beginning of the year, commodity prices have surged by more than 30 per cent as a result of record food and oil costs. That growing tension between the supply of and demand for agricultural products is a result of a complex cycle of factors, such as skyrocketing energy costs, increasing demand from emerging economies, the unfolding of the credit crisis in the real economy and commodity speculation.

Climate changes, intensifying drought, floods and cyclones, and the increasing popularity of ethanol-based biofuel have taken food off the world's table. As a result of all those complex factors, for more than 2 billion people today higher food prices are a matter of daily struggle, sacrifice and survival. All economies regardless of size and strength, but particularly the least developed, have been affected. That is why it is an emergency. That is why prompt action and global coordination are necessary.

A comprehensive multilateral approach based on the framework is necessary to address the crises, minimize the negative spillovers and lay the foundations for improved supply over the medium term. The framework for action has two key objectives: first, to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, and secondly, to build long-term global food security. To achieve that, the Secretary-General has called for the international community to provide $25 billion per annum to support those goals. Overall, the multilateral system — including the World Food Programme, the World Bank, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the IMF, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations — has already amassed around $2.3 billion, and the G8 countries around $10 billion, to support food aid, nutrition interventions, social protection activities and measures to increase agricultural output in affected countries.

That is still well short of what is needed annually. I would therefore like to call on donors and the multilateral system to do more, not only because development aid for agriculture has fallen from a high of 17 per cent in the 1970s to just 3 per cent today, but also because the real impact of each dollar spent on food aid is almost half of what it was last year.

The General Assembly must now provide the political commitment necessary so that the measures before us today receive widespread international support. The General Assembly should also play an active and crucial role by facilitating global partnerships on food and agriculture involving all relevant actors — national Governments, the private sector, civil society, donors and international institutions. The United Nations must facilitate and coordinate all those actors, while the General Assembly should set the overall policy direction.

We should carefully listen to those voices that are calling for more sustainable patterns of consumption and production as the pillars of a new economic model. We must now begin to take the tough initial steps so that, over the long term, we can inject new life into multilateralism and move to a new economic paradigm for the twenty-first century.

In order to do so, we must use every available process and mechanism at our disposal to address the food crisis. That includes financing for development, climate change, upcoming meetings on Africa's development needs and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the United Nations overall reform agenda. We must also systematically address longer-term structural issues to create economic security for all.

An urgent and mandatory step at the global level is to reach an agreement to rationalize agricultural policies by ensuring a swift and successful outcome to the Doha Trade Round. As long as agriculture continues to experience more market-distorting policies than any other sector, we cannot count on sustainable global food security. It has been estimated that reducing subsidies and lifting tariffs and other trade barriers would stimulate food production and offer a route to development for 180 million small farmers in Africa.

The food crisis therefore offers a win-win opportunity for the international community to collectively agree to policies that promote trade efficiency while also boosting agricultural production and reducing the vulnerability of the poorest around the world. Spiralling oil prices in the context of a warming global climate also offer the opportunity to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by embracing new cleaner and sustainable energy, such as wind, solar and — why not? — nuclear.

Most importantly, we must have the courage to actively engage those issues and to take decisions. I would therefore support the calls made by several Member States for food security and development to be one of the main priorities of the sixty-third session. However, given the urgency of dealing with the food and energy crisis, the General Assembly should adopt a resolution calling for immediate concerted global action at this session. Unless we collectively develop a joint solution to deal with the food and energy crisis, all of our efforts to address climate change and achieve our Millennium Development Goals will be fatally undermined.

I now call on the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to review progress in addressing the global food and energy crisis. As you will recall from my previous briefings, I have established, at the request of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis bringing together the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant international organizations, to respond to the crisis in a coherent and coordinated way.

Even before prices started rising dramatically, nearly 10,000 children were dying from causes related to malnutrition every day. At least 800 million people were going to sleep hungry every night. That is a moral outrage.

At the same time, the effects of climate change — such as increased exposure to drought, rising temperatures, more erratic rainfall and extreme weather events — are threatening water and agricultural systems, potentially condemning millions more to face malnutrition and water shortages. And now, with energy costs soaring and the price of food having increased by more than 50 per cent in the past year alone, the problem is certain to worsen, potentially pushing an additional 100 million people into hunger and poverty.

The double jeopardy of high food and fuel prices threatens to undermine much of the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As I stated at the G8 summit in Hokkaido, the three critical challenges to our shared humanity and, in fact, to our way of life — realizing the Millennium Development Goals, addressing climate change, and responding to the global food and energy crisis — are interrelated and global in nature. They therefore require a global response through global partnerships. We cannot afford to fail or betray the hopes of those tens of millions of vulnerable. The crisis is not a short-term issue; it will require the sustained attention of Governments, donors, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector for years to come.

The world community is already moving in that direction. At the G8 summit, leaders of the world's richest countries made important commitments to tackling the triple challenge of climate change, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the food and energy crises. In early July, the Economic and Social Council, in its Ministerial Declaration, recognized the seriousness and complexity of the global food crisis and reiterated that its consequences require a comprehensive and coordinated response by national Governments and the international community. That action is under way.

United Nations agencies and their partners are shifting resources and mobilizing new funds to ensure that food assistance and nutritional care reach those most in need. We are supplying small farmers in developing countries with seeds, fertilizers and other inputs to grow more crops. That is a start, but with so many millions of people threatened by the crisis, all of us, including Member States, need to do much more, immediately. Those efforts need to be stepped up further and sustained over the next three to five years.

Allow me to applaud today's proposal by the European Commission for a special facility, worth more than $1.5 billion, that would provide a rapid response to the food crisis. Crucially, the money would be in addition to existing development funds and would be provided to the developing countries most in need. The funds would be disbursed in coordination with the United Nations Task Force and other international organizations.

To reach the MDG on reducing poverty and hunger, we need a global partnership for food. Governments must be at the centre, but we all — Member States, donors, United Nations entities, Bretton Woods institutions, the scientific and academic communities, businesses, non-governmental organizations and civil society — have to work together.

I believe that the global partnership should be guided in its actions by the comprehensive framework for action before us today. The framework has been developed by my High-Level Task Force and represents the agreed-upon and consolidated guidance of all its participating agencies and organizations.

From the outset, it is important to understand what the framework is and what it is not. The framework is not a one-size-fits-all blueprint for a response that will work in every situation, but rather a menu of actions that must tailored to the specific context and needs of each country and inform national Governments' food security strategies. The framework is not a fundraising vehicle and it does not provide detailed costing. Rather, it aims to catalyse country-level action by providing Governments and key partners with the main elements for formulating responses. It recognizes that any response must take into account the specific circumstances of particular countries or regions. While many actions may require external assistance, the framework's suggested policies and actions are intended above all to build countries' own capacities and resilience to future shocks.

The next steps we need to take are clear. First and immediately, we must ensure that vulnerable populations are not left without urgent help in the midst of the emergency. We should do that by scaling up food assistance and other nutrition interventions; increasing predictable financial support for food aid; reducing restrictions on donor contributions; and exempting purchases of humanitarian relief food from export restrictions and added export taxes. We may also need to establish a global reserve system for humanitarian food.

Secondly, we must act immediately to boost agricultural production this year. We should do that by providing urgently needed seeds and fertilizers for the upcoming planting cycles, especially for the world's small-scale farmers. It is high time to reverse the dramatic and deplorable downward trend in agriculture's share in official development assistance (ODA). ODA has dropped from 18 per cent 20 years ago to just around 3 per cent today. I have urged the G8 leaders and international donors to increase the portion of ODA devoted to agriculture from 3 per cent to at least 10 per cent.

Thirdly, we must improve fair trade and the free flow of markets by reducing agricultural subsidies in G8 countries. The rise in agricultural commodity prices in low-income, food-insecure countries offers an opportunity to reallocate savings to agricultural investment.

Fourthly, we must significantly increase investment in agriculture and rural development so as to make them a viable sector of the economy. We should do that by boosting public spending on agriculture and rural infrastructure.

Fifthly, we must strengthen global food commodity markets to meet the needs of all countries and people, particularly the poor, including by minimizing export restrictions and levies on food commodities to help stabilize food prices. I call again for a rapid conclusion of the next World Trade Organization Doha Development Round.

Sixthly, Member States must reassess subsidies and tariff protections for biofuel production. It is true that biofuels will need to remain a part of the equation in our fight against climate change, but we also need to establish an international consensus and agreed policy guidelines on ways to balance the development of biofuels with food production priorities, ensuring complementarity.

As stated earlier, the financial implications related to the crisis will require substantial political and financial commitments — from national Governments and donors first and foremost, but also from the private sector, civil society and the international system. To achieve the goals of the comprehensive framework for action, estimates suggest that between $25 and $40 billion annually may be needed. Whatever the exact sums, that is the order of magnitude required.

We must reverse years of underinvestment in agriculture and change the policies that have magnified the challenges. I urge members of the Assembly to immediately and substantially scale up public spending to respond effectively to the pressing needs of the world's hungry people.

The promises are there; now is the time to fulfil them — jointly. The cost of inaction would be unacceptably high. Over 100 million people could slide into hunger. Insecurity and political instability in the most affected countries could grow, increasing not only the immeasurable human costs, but also the inevitable expenses of addressing conflict. Migration would increase further. Global inflation would worsen; economic growth could stagnate. Trade opportunities between regions would be lost. Some of the important gains towards realizing the MDGs would be squandered. Worse, by 2030, world food demand will have risen by 50 per cent, and by 2050 the world's population will have increased by a third. If we do not seek lasting solutions now, more children will die each day, more families will go to bed hungry. The threats left to the next generation will be even greater.

Addressing the global food and fuel crisis swiftly and responsibly, with the necessary sense of urgency and lasting commitment, will be one of the generational challenges that impact our collective future. Let us all live up to that responsibility.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Angel Edmundo Orellana Mercado, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras.

Mr. Orellana Mercado (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to commend you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General on your excellent work in your respective posts. Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address this Assembly, on behalf of the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA).

I am here to appeal to the conscience of the world concerning the negative impact of the high prices of fuel, denying several million people in our region access to the most basic products for human consumption. We are being victimized by the inequities in international markets, and this global crisis obliges the most vulnerable population groups in our countries to struggle simply to survive and to do battle every day in order to find sufficient food.

In my recent statement at the High-level session of the Economic and Social Council, as current Chair of SICA, I urged, in fulfilment of the mandate of the System and together with the Federative Republic of Brazil, that a special session of the General Assembly be convened on an emergency basis to find solutions to those problems.

The exorbitant prices of food have now turned basic foodstuffs into luxury and inaccessible goods, and some are even being used to produce biofuels, thus adding to a crisis of unforeseeable magnitude and effect.

The crisis demands immediate responses. We cannot consign it to oblivion and indifference to the neediest in our societies. It is therefore essential that the General Assembly should play a more active and dynamic role in formulating short- and medium-term strategies that will provide viable solutions.

We greatly appreciate the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish the High-Level Task Force that has presented proposals for action in combating the world food crisis. We also applaud the progress achieved in various forums that are today tackling the problems associated with food security, climate change and bioenergy.

Moreover, the countries of SICA, despite our limited resources, are continuing to strive to combat hunger and poverty. We are exchanging experiences that will allow us to develop and execute a regional policy in the social, environmental and energy sectors, which are seriously threatened by the current world crisis.

At the same time, this is a great opportunity for us to reaffirm the content of the statement of the summit held on 7 May in Managua, Nicaragua, which addressed the questions of sovereignty and food security and took an inclusive approach that will enable us to protect our environment and, at the same time, preserve the traditions of production and consumption that are inherent to our populations.

We cannot ignore the fact that speculative behaviour on the stock market is shunting the whole world towards a catastrophe and stripping millions of people around the world of their dignity. We should note the recent statement of the Group of Eight to the effect that the record prices of oil and food are a serious challenge to the stability of world growth. At the same time, the Group called for countries that have food stocks to release them to those countries in greatest need.

We in Central America, along with other regions and countries, have been able to work together to agree on policies to address the problems of climate change and food security. At the same time, we are fully aware of the fact that we need the support of other countries or groups of countries that are better endowed than we are. When we say that we need the support of others, we are referring to specific situations that, in the ideal vision of a fair and equitable world, would be easily achieved goals.

Just by way of example, I would note that, if trade barriers did not exist, our exportable production would come to the market in more competitive circumstances and generate more income for our productive sectors; if production subsidies did not increasingly distort agricultural trade, then our economies, which are sustained by the commodities sector, would probably be strengthened and enjoy greater opportunities for job creation; and if migration were not regarded as a crime and migrants were treated not as international offenders but as human beings, then very probably development, progress and harmony among nations would make it possible to close the gulf between the wealthiest and the poorest countries.

Those examples may be part of an unattainable aspiration, but our region will never renounce its dreams of a fair world in which there are opportunities for everyone and in which solidarity is the basic rule governing relations among all members of the international community.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership in this Organization's endeavours to assess the crisis created by the unstoppable rise in oil prices and to formulate a plan of action to address its consequences.

All global crises land here, and the crisis created by the rise in oil and basic food prices is among the worst that our peoples have faced in the past 80 years. This therefore is the appropriate forum in which to address it and to find its solution.

The development of all economies has relied on fossil fuels, and the anomaly of a market where prices change every day is becoming a widespread threat to economic growth and political stability. The fact that one of the main results of the energy crisis is a shortage of basic foodstuffs makes that challenge doubly traumatic.

Vast numbers of people who survive thanks to the emergency assistance of the World Food Programme of the United Nations are unexpectedly faced with the horrible prospect of starving to death. Ever larger numbers of people in our countries are already preparing themselves for the need to feed themselves.

The scale of the global food crisis, as reflected in the recent report of the High-Level Task Force chaired by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reveals the dramatic nature of the difficulties involved. With 854 million people malnourished and another 100 million that may be driven into poverty and hunger, the crisis already has the magnitude of a world emergency.

Crippled economies, billions of people without access to sufficient nutrition, political and social tensions — that is an explosive combination for our countries and for the world. The situation collectively affects most countries and nations.

Such difficulties cannot be resolved in a lasting fashion by domestic measures. Their causes are out of our control, and some are linked to speculative processes that cannot be regulated by our Governments.

Thus, the situation calls for a collective solution and an equal measure of cooperation and international solidarity commensurate, at the very least, with the scale of the problems. If we take into account the fact that the growing phenomenon of globalization has made us increasingly interdependent, it will not be long before we witness a situation in which all of us, in one form or another, will be harmed. Some will lack money; some will lack food; others will lack oil. Economies may collapse; political tensions may be heightened. Mass illegal migration will become unstoppable. Democratic governance will become precarious or will disappear. The world may become unlivable.

We are not here to play for time, to indulge in the useless exercise of casting blame, or to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye. We are faced with a genuine emergency situation. Our country, the Dominican Republic, is part of a group of States Members of this Organization that are net oil importers with an annual per capita income of $6,000 or less, for which the increases in the price of crude are already a crushing financial burden.

Our President, Leonel Fernández Reyna, assessing the economic impact of the increases in the price of oil over the past year on those economies, stated that those increases represent some $42 billion over the past year alone. He accordingly proposed the idea that a similar sum, representing a very small percentage of the additional income that petroleum-exporting countries received in the same period, should be contributed to the establishment of a global oil solidarity fund that could very well be administered by agencies of the United Nations system.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took a pioneering step when, three years ago, it signed the generous PetroCaribe agreement, which created a mechanism to provide financial protection to a group of countries in Central America and the Caribbean from the negative impact that the rise in the price of oil was having on their economies. That is a tremendous model and should be emulated.

Here, we should like to restate the proposal made by President Fernández of the Dominican Republic, to the effect that nations with an annual per capita income of $6,000 or less represent a single block and should present a petition for solidarity to the oil-exporting countries. If the $42 billion that have been extracted from our economies over the past year solely to pay for the rises in the price of oil during that time were returned in the form of concessional inputs, soft loans repayable over the long term and direct investment, growth and stability would return. The bulk of those resources could be invested in providing incentives for food production, the development of more productive, light-resistant enhanced seed stocks, the diversification of available energy sources and, above all, the development of renewable energy projects.

The struggle that we are calling for today is not one of power or domination. It is a struggle for justice and for the rights of our peoples to a decent life lived in peace and freedom.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Marisol Argueta de Barillas, Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

Ms. Argueta de Barillas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to commend you, Sir, for convening this meeting of the General Assembly to discuss an issue of great interest to our countries. My delegation echoes the views and ideas put forward by my colleague from the Republic of Honduras on behalf of the Central American Integration System, as well as the statement to be made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

A few days ago, the Secretary-General, speaking in Japan at the G8 summit, stated that the world is facing three simultaneous crises — a food crisis, a climate crisis and a development crisis. He added that those crises are profoundly interlinked and that they need to be addressed in a comprehensive way.

El Salvador takes the view that, in the case of the food and development crises, the exorbitant and rising prices of oil play a great role. The President of the Republic of El Salvador, in previous statements to the General Assembly, strongly appealed for attention to be paid to the negative economic and social consequences inherent in the constant rises in the price of hydrocarbon fuels that we are now experiencing and that could also threaten the very governability of our nations.

The rise in oil prices are generating macro- and microeconomic imbalances, drastically affecting productivity and trade in all areas and especially in the agricultural sector, in particular in the most vulnerable developing countries. Compounding those crisis factors is the negative impact of climate change and the urgent need to discuss questions of biodiversity, including the need to seek alternative, environmentally friendly energy sources.

In that regard, we trust that the negotiating process begun in Bali will conclude successfully in Copenhagen in 2009. Our basic endeavours should be aimed at achieving a global agreement on the further reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time achieving substantive agreements on mitigation, adaptation, technological transfer and financing for the developing countries.

The situation compels us to seek a coordinated global response in multilateral forums. That is why we welcome the comprehensive framework for action, introduced by the Secretary-General in his statement this morning, which will serve as an integrated and coherent response by the United Nations system. We believe that this road map will help to supplement national efforts designed to tackle those problems, which, with their cascade effect, are seriously jeopardizing the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty, hunger and child malnutrition and the strengthening of governance.

In that context, we call respectfully but urgently on the oil-producing countries to adopt policies that are robust, predictable and in keeping with current realities so as to avoid a deepening of the crisis. In addition, we urge them to consider including in existing cooperation instruments not only favourable financing arrangements, but also preferential pricing, for developing countries. We also call on markets linked to oil and food to act responsibly in order to eradicate speculative practices in investments in the fuel and staple-grain futures markets.

Furthermore, drastic measures must be taken with regard to agricultural subsidies in developed countries. That would encourage and reactivate agricultural production in developing countries, which would have positive effects on the importation of such products by developed countries. That in turn would simultaneously help to break the deadlock in the current trade negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organization, strengthening the possibilities of success for the Doha Development Round.

It should be pointed out that in El Salvador, we are making great efforts to protect vulnerable groups, particularly children and the poorest families in rural areas, through social programmes to reduce extreme poverty, hunger and child malnutrition and to attain other objectives set in the Millennium Development Goals. To that end, the Government is also working with the private sector and civil society organizations to address the various challenges arising from the global food and energy crisis. In that regard, the multidisciplinary commission established by the President of the Republic will present its report to the nation on 29 July.

However, we are aware that national efforts are insufficient. That is why, in the regional sphere, we are also planning and promoting joint initiatives, such as the action plan of the Central American Livestock Council, to increase the production of staple grains and ensure the supply of cereals in our region.

At the multilateral level, international cooperation plays a decisive role in supplementing national efforts to achieve sustainable development. We believe that such cooperation should be combined with other means of support for development, including debt cancellation to promote investment in the social, health, educational and environmental areas.

North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation should be strengthened and focused in order to create alternatives in a combination of efforts and political will that will enable us to meet the most urgent needs of our peoples. In that context, we thank the countries members of the Group of Eight for the commitments undertaken at their recent meeting in Japan. We also support the initiative to create a global agriculture and food partnership.

Finally, El Salvador believes that we have the time to achieve a comprehensive response. The challenge of ensuring food, energy and environmental security represents an opportunity to unite our resolve, our efforts, our resources and our initiative in fulfilling our historical international responsibility to overcome these challenges for the well-being of all our peoples.

Mr. Blake (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in this plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the global food and energy crisis.

The Group wishes to compliment you, Mr. President, on the initiative to organize this meeting. We thank you for inviting the Secretary-General to brief the General Assembly on the revised version of the comprehensive framework for action developed by his High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. The Group of 77 and China is on record as requiring that, while we must be in crisis mode, opportunities be found for United Nations Member States to be continuously updated and kept involved in the process. In the final analysis, any recommendation aimed at meaningfully addressing the global food crisis must be accepted and implemented by national Governments, individually or as a group, and by local populations.

The Group is pleased to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing, for the document and for earlier briefings on the global food crisis and the initiatives of the United Nations to respond.

Given the limited time available for this statement, and the fact that the comprehensive framework for action is intended for early action in light of soaring food prices and, in some cases, limited availability over the past year — on top of the long-standing deep structural crisis in the agricultural and food sectors in developing countries during the past 20 to 25 years — the Group of 77 and China has decided to concentrate in this statement on the framework.

The Group of 77 and China is very conscious of the fact that it has had very little time to study a complex document addressing a most complex set of issues and intended to guide action in a large number of States at different levels of development and with different specificities in their agriculture and food sectors. Furthermore, delegations have not had an opportunity to consult their capitals on the proposed framework. The Group therefore reserves the right to return to the framework with more detailed comments, either in writing or orally, if there is an early opportunity to do so.

The Group of 77 and China is pleased to note that there has been a recognition of, among other things, the following.

First, prior to the onset of the recent phase in the escalation of global food prices, some 854 million people — mainly in developing countries — were undernourished, and 4.8 billion human beings suffer from hunger today. They live in a food crisis in a world of plenty.

Secondly, many poor small-scale farmers have been prevented by a lack of inputs, investment and facilities for marketing from taking advantage of high prices or, indeed, withstanding global competition in their local markets.

Thirdly, increased productivity must be accompanied by investment in local and regional market development and adjustment and, we would add, the elimination of global trade-distorting practices.

Finally, there is need for urgent and simultaneous attention to meeting the immediate food needs of vulnerable populations, to building resilience and to contributing to global food and nutrition security.

The Group of 77 and China is struck by the fact that while the framework document correctly recognizes that the financial implications of the crisis will be considerable, the High-Level Task Force, in paragraph 13 of the executive summary of the comprehensive framework for action, simply recognizes developed countries' intention to increase their official development assistance (ODA) to 0.7 per cent of gross national income and urges donor countries to double ODA for food assistance. That is an invitation to reallocate existing ODA. At the same time, the High-Level Task Force, in the same paragraph, "calls on developing countries to allocate additional budgetary resources for social protection systems and to increase the share of agriculture in their public expenditure", this at a time when national budgets, especially of net food importing and energy importing developing countries, are under very significant strain.

The High-Level Task Force has also avoided a detailed costing of the financial implications on the grounds that the comprehensive framework for action "is not a funding document or an investment programme" (Executive summary, para. 11). The Group of 77 and China is of the view that the comprehensive framework for action should be a living document which can and should be expanded over time to incorporate actions which will make it more meaningful and more responsive to the actual needs of the developing countries. This should be very possible since the Task Force will remain in existence for some time. It must also give priority to the interests of the poorest and neediest groups. Therefore, such a framework should be more local in scale as well as much more sustainable in social, environmental and economic terms.

The Group of 77 and China is also struck by the fact that, given the importance of technology and research and development to increasing agricultural food production and productivity in a situation of high energy prices, climate change, and given the need to minimize adverse environmental impacts, the issue of access to technology and transfer found no mention in the comprehensive framework. Further, it is unclear whether the trade and tax policies which are to be adjusted to improve access to food and nutrition support and increase food availability include international trade policies such as trade-distorting subsidies. A clear mention should have been made to subsidies and trade-distorting practices in the developed world as a major deterrent to agricultural development in the developing world and, consequently, a cause of the current food crisis.

The Group of 77 and China maintains that the comprehensive framework for action must, at this stage, remain a living framework and a living process to allow for governmental and wider societal input, acceptance and approval. In this regard, and accepting the need to proceed to action, the Group of 77 and China considers that there should be a third urgent and simultaneous objective. That objective would be to ensure, secure and strengthen buy-in and ownership at the community, national and regional levels. Activities towards that objective, such as consultations with the international community here at the United Nations, with regions, subregions and national Governments and with relevant stakeholders would and should be pursued urgently and simultaneously with the actions on the other two objectives. This would permit action, involvement and transparency.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro, and the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

A little over a month ago in Rome, the international community met under the aegis of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to seek solutions for the food crisis and make progress towards international food security. The wish to foster improved international agricultural governance to better address the crisis was at the root of the organization of the conference and its adoption of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security. That wish also motivated the proposal for an international partnership, taken up by the Group of Eight (G8), which includes: a political component, with the strengthening of international coordination between all relevant actors; a scientific component, with the creation of an independent international group of scientists; and a financial component, with the scaling up of financing in the fight against food insecurity.

Against this backdrop, we welcome the initiative undertaken by the Secretary-General to create a High-Level Task Force, chaired by Mr. John Holmes, which was mandated to define a comprehensive framework for action. Based on an analysis of comparative advantages of each stakeholder institution, this framework for action provides a particularly relevant action programme. It also offers a pertinent analysis of the current food crisis and presents a series of ambitious and constructive goals and actions. Now, we must together define the future role and functioning of the High-Level Task Force, add clarification regarding the establishment of the world partnership.

The European Union recognizes the need mentioned in the comprehensive framework for action for a coordinated approach at the national and regional levels among all partners, which must be carried out based on the needs and priorities of developing countries. As rightly underscored in the comprehensive framework for action, that partnership must comply with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which will be updated in September in Accra.

The European Union recognizes that the emergency response to the most worrying humanitarian situations must also fit into long-term development thinking. Food aid must not be given to the detriment of the local economic fabric, and it is necessary to buy locally or regionally whenever possible, which may additionally curtail the impact of the volatility of international food prices. Consequently, the European Union intends to promote untied food aid provided in financial form. In this respect, the European Union believes that consideration should continue to be given to the revision of the London Convention on Food Aid. In addition, the European Union recalls the primary responsibility of States, which must in particular ensure humanitarian access for the most severely affected populations.

Specifically, the European Union provides significant humanitarian and food aid to a large number of the world's worst-hit regions, and firmly intends to work to offer sustainable solutions to this crisis by providing emergency aid and social protection, by setting up a fund to support farming in developing countries and by increasing aid for agricultural production in order to reduce the effects of price increases.

The allocation of an additional €1 billion — $1.5 billion — is now under way. As indicated by the Secretary-General, those funds will be used within the framework for cooperation established by the United Nations. They are aimed in particular at assisting African farmers.

Regarding its joint agricultural policy, the reform implemented by the European Union has further focused on the market and many supply management measures have been abolished. The European Union recently intervened to lower prices in global markets by selling its relief stocks and by cultivating fallow land. Those measures are now beginning to bear fruit.

At the same time, the European Union is trying to create an international trade environment that supports small producers in developing countries. It has set itself the goal of reaching an ambitious, balanced and comprehensive agreement at the Doha Round that could help remove imbalances in world agricultural markets. It also wants to promote effective reform in the Food and Agriculture Organization, as it considers that the expected synergies of the three Rome-based agencies should allow them to play an essential role in providing aid to countries as they combat the food crisis.

The European Union recalls that it is also at the forefront of the fight against climate change, the effects of which threaten to worsen the food crisis in a large number of countries that are increasingly affected by drought and the scarcity of water, as well as in countries that experience recurrent flooding.

The European Union is very conscious of the fact that rising energy prices are also directly affecting agricultural prices by raising the price of inputs and transportation costs, which will have a significant impact on the cost of food aid. Biofuel policies may also affect the production and prices of agricultural products for food, and it will be necessary to ensure the sustainability of biofuel policies by setting sustainability criteria for the production of first-generation biofuels and by encouraging the development of second-generation biofuels made from by-products.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate here that the European Union pledges to work ambitiously and constructively with all its bilateral and multilateral partners to lessen the negative impacts of the food crisis and to make the most of opportunities identified by the High-Level Task Force.

Mr. Botora (Ethiopia): I would first like, on behalf of the African Group, to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting and the Secretary-General for his statement updating us on current developments with regard to the global food and energy crisis and on the activities undertaken by the United Nations to effectively tackle the problem since his last briefing to the Assembly on 18 June 2008. We appreciate the Secretary-General's leadership role, in particular the continued attention he has accorded to the crisis through the mobilization of the resources and political action needed for an effective response by the international community.

The African Group would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The revised version of the comprehensive framework for action prepared by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis is concrete testimony to the continued and unrelenting efforts of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant international organizations, to urgently respond to the global food crisis in a coherent and coordinated manner. The African Group, however, has not yet carefully and thoroughly examined the document, nor have delegations had the time to consult their capitals on the proposed framework. The Group therefore shares the general views of the Group of 77 and China and looks forward to providing its opinions and comments in detail at future meetings of the Assembly.

We are seeing with each passing day that the food and energy crisis continues to escalate, especially putting the lives of poor and vulnerable groups at greater risk. The crisis has worsened the situation of millions of small-scale farmers, already precarious due to poor and failed harvests brought about by erratic weather conditions, and has made millions of people unable to afford to feed their families. Moreover, the fact that the agricultural sector has not been given priority leaves small-scale farmers on their own without modern technical advice on farming, with inadequate infrastructure such as roads and storehouses, and lacking access to markets.

Africa, within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, recognized that problem five years ago and worked out a feasible strategy called the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme to address agricultural challenges in a coordinated and effective fashion. It is obvious that those drawbacks in the agricultural sector, along with the adverse effects of climate change and the surge in energy prices, have compounded the difficulties of developing countries, especially African countries, in surmounting their growing development challenges.

Africa, despite its positive economic growth in recent years, remains the most impoverished continent in the world. Its mounting development challenges have continued to hinder its efforts to achieve rapid economic growth and sustainable development. The current global economic turmoil has exacerbated the already difficult and complex situation even further. Global food prices have significantly contributed to a hike in local food prices, causing serious macroeconomic volatility. The region imports almost all of the fertilizer and pesticides it uses, and because their prices have doubled over the past year, there is growing concern about the negative impact of those prices on the patterns and sustainability of the food production required in the coming planting season.

In our continent, where the majority of the population still earns a living from subsistence farming, the root of the problem lies in decades of neglect of agriculture. Although the food crisis has many causes, we believe that the lack of adequate and long-term investment in the agricultural sector is the major factor that has plunged many African countries into severe economic deprivation. In that regard, we welcome the emphasis accorded to long-term investment in agriculture by the High-Level Task Force and the package of support to be provided to small-scale farmers.

That issue is a major concern for Africa. It is precisely for that underlying reason that African leaders in the recently concluded African Union summit, held in Sharm el-Sheikh in the Arab Republic of Egypt, adopted a declaration entitled "Response to the challenges of high food prices and agricultural development". The declaration reflects Africa's concerns about the adverse impact of the current crisis, caused by high food prices, on African countries, particularly on the poor and vulnerable segments of the population, and recognizes the fact that the crisis will divert meagre national resources from development activities in order to meet urgent food imports. The declaration has clearly indicated the strategy to be pursued in the short, medium and long terms and stakeholders both in the continent and abroad to be involved in the search for an early and effective response to the crisis.

The declaration also calls, among other things, for a global partnership that deals with the causes and repercussions of the current food crisis and for the immediate launching of an international high-level dialogue between food exporters and importers from developed and developing countries. In that regard, the African Group wishes to reiterate the summit's call on the international community to continue to support the objective of the declaration and to implement it fully to effectively address the crisis.

We wish, in that connection, to note with appreciation that the G8 summit has continued to place emphasis on Africa and to assist its development efforts. We also welcome the G8 commitment of $10 billion to support food aid and measures to increase agricultural input. The intention of the G8 to launch a new global partnership on agriculture by the time of the upcoming General Assembly session in September is also highly commendable.

Notwithstanding all efforts made thus far, we believe that much still remains to be done. The world food and energy crisis needs the undivided attention and action of the United Nations and the international community. The successful implementation of the internationally agreed development goals and the Millennium Development Goals is also closely interlinked with efforts to address the crisis. It is thus clear that a concerted effort by the international community to translate commitment and pledges into action in order to realize all development goals, including working together for the successful outcome of development goals and climate change negotiation, is a key and critical element of our response strategy.

Mr. Gregoire (Dominica): I have the honour to speak for the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at the United Nations. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

CARICOM commends you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to discuss the global food and energy crisis. We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the revised comprehensive framework for action, following closely on the heels of the recent Food and Agriculture Organization High-Level Conference on World Food Security, held in Rome last month, where world leaders underlined the need for the entire international community to join forces to tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

The global food crisis has the potential to significantly affect the development of developing countries, in particular least developed countries and middle-income countries. The impact of the crisis is multiplied given that it is happening at a time when the international community is grappling with the negative impacts of climate change, increasing turbulence in global trade and financial markets, and an unfolding global economic recession.

Rising energy costs and food prices not only undermine the stability of the global economic system, but also threaten the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in particular MDG 1 on the eradication of poverty and hunger. Given that the MDGs are intricately linked and mutually reinforcing, the adverse impact on the achievement of the other MDGs is unquestionable. The crisis, which is multidimensional in nature, has the potential therefore to negatively impact economic growth, social progress and even political security.

The dramatic increase in food prices has become a major concern for the net food-importing and largely indebted countries of the Caribbean Community, prompting responses at the national and regional levels. The region has experienced a significant increase in food price inflation, with price increases most notable on basic goods, which are usually purchased by the most vulnerable groups in society. That has sparked protests in one of our own sister countries in the region.

At the regional level, Governments have agreed to remove the common external tariff on a number of items to alleviate the impact of the rising cost of food on the people of the region. In addition, heads of Government are contemplating an initiative aimed at creating an enabling economic and business environment at the regional level for agribusiness competitiveness and sustainable agriculture and rural development.

In response to soaring energy costs, CARICOM is committed to taking decisive action to promote greater energy conservation and efficiency and to supporting the increased use of renewable energy as an alternative source of energy. The generous contribution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — known as PetroCaribe — to CARICOM and Central America, under the visionary initiative of President Hugo Chávez must be emulated by the other oil-producing nations.

Those complex threats are all global in nature and lie beyond the control of the small vulnerable economies of the Caribbean. The constraints that we face in effectively responding to those crises underline the challenge posed to promoting sustainable development in small island developing States and the need to ensure that policy responses at the international level take into account the special and unique circumstances of the smallest and most vulnerable members of the international community and focus on building resilience in those countries.

We therefore call on the international community to take urgent and collective action to address the food crisis, including its structural and systemic causes. Such action should seek to increase global food production and investment in agriculture, address agricultural subsidies, reduce the negative impacts of speculative activity, transform the global trade regime, ensure greater sustainability in the production of biofuels, and ensure that all financial pledges and commitments made to developing countries are delivered in a timely manner.

We note the findings and recommendations of the comprehensive framework for action of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. Given the volume and complexity of the document, CARICOM is still reviewing the document and looks forward to further opportunities in the near future to submit our views, in keeping with our firm commitment to effectively addressing the crisis.

Given the scale of the emergency, CARICOM supports the call by some Member States to make the food crisis a major focus of the sixty-third session.

Mr. Tupouniua (Tonga): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States, comprising Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the global food and energy crisis. We also thank you for inviting the Secretary-General to brief the General Assembly on the revised version of the framework for action developed by the High-Level Task Force. It is important for all Member States to be actively involved in the final analysis and to make recommendations to address the current global food and energy crisis. We commend the Secretary-General for providing a clear focus on solving the food crisis we currently face.

We would like to elaborate on specific areas he highlighted that are of relevance to the Pacific small island developing States, as follows: addressing structural changes that impede agricultural development, ensuring long-term investments in smallholder farming, reinforcing social safety nets in the most vulnerable countries, developing new financial mechanisms to enhance rural infrastructure needs, eliminating trade and taxation policies that distort the market, supporting research and technology in food production and encouraging adaptation measures.

Addressing structural changes in our agricultural development and the long-term investment in smallholder farming is crucial to our region. Over 90 per cent of the population in our region relies on agriculture and fisheries as a main source of livelihood.

Food production is therefore a major concern for our region. With the soaring prices of basic food commodities, we can no longer rely on traditional methods of conservation and ways of securing food sources. It is thus of great importance for our region to work with our donor and development partners to reinforce the social safety net to ensure that our people have access to basic food commodities.

The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicated that at lower latitudes, especially in seasonally dry and tropical regions, agricultural productivity is projected to decrease for small local temperature increases of one to two degrees. The Pacific small island developing States are therefore particularly vulnerable as the frequency of floods is likely to increase, and that has put an enormous strain and increased pressure on our coastal settlements and rural infrastructure.

Therefore, it is of great importance to our region to see new developments in financial mechanisms to enhance rural infrastructure needs. The impact of climate change on our rural infrastructure would increase the need for financing for adaptation purposes as well.

Natural disasters disrupt food production, reduce the quantity of locally available produce and damage infrastructure such as roads and storage facilities, which results in problems in accessing sufficient quantities of both local and externally sourced food. Most Pacific small island developing States are showing worrying rates of dependency on imported foods. Basic staples, such as rice and wheat for flour, are key substitutes in traditional diets. The situation is critical in terms of food security, given the volatility of international commodity prices. Therefore, it is a priority of our region to see an increase in support for research in technology in the area of food production and to encourage adaptation measures.

It is also our hope that the world can work together to eliminate trade and taxation policies that distort the market. Without an equitable trade and taxation system, smallhold farmers from our region will not be able to compete in the global market.

The Pacific small island developing States are most vulnerable to a food and energy security crisis. In fact, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has recently declared a national state of emergency due to an imminent threat to its energy security. Unless urgent international action is taken, the Marshall Islands will be without energy after its current supplies are exhausted in early September. Despite a rapid escalation in consumer fees, the Marshall Islands faces an unmet gap between revenues and energy costs that is equal to 20 per cent of its national budget. In addition, energy prices have placed food staples out of reach for much of the Marshall Islands population and have impacted the transport of basic lifeline services to its remote outer island areas. The national crisis is a severe example of the extreme economic vulnerability to global energy price shocks facing our Pacific region.

The energy crisis is also of serious concern to our region. Both the energy and food crises are direct results of unsustainable economic and agricultural practices. Our leaders believe there remains a need for continued high-level support to address our energy requirements as well as efforts to secure equitable and affordable energy. In the Pacific Islands Forum communiqué, our leaders outlined key strategies for maintaining energy security, the emphasis of which is on technology transfer and partnership building with our development partners to secure affordable sources of energy and to develop coping mechanisms to address energy shortages.

The Pacific energy ministers' meeting provided a great impetus in the region to focus on finding solutions to the energy crisis. The leaders commissioned work focusing on regional bulk fuel procurement for the consideration of the Forum. The proposal also outlines specific mitigation and adaptation strategies in situations of energy crisis, such as effective rationing of energy and raising public awareness of energy efficiency.

However, much like our situation with the food security crisis, securing affordable energy and finding alternate sources of energy are challenging tasks for our region. We need the support of United Nations agencies, donor and development partners, the private sector, civil society and communities. We have received effective and timely assistance from regional organizations, donors and international agencies that have helped our region to increase our capacity in food production. Let me take this opportunity to thank our donor countries and extend our wishes to continue to work with them.

One of the development projects we hope to emulate is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) initiative launched in 2002. The FAO Plan of Action on Sustainable Agriculture in small island developing States encourages our region to move towards sustainable agricultural practices in order to create an enabling environment for agricultural intensification and diversification.

We understand that the key to the success of the High-Level Task Force will rely heavily on close partnership with Member States at the national level, civil society and the private sector. Our leaders are keen to working closely with the Task Force, and we have studied the elements of the comprehensive framework of action.

We commend the Task Force for the clear focus of the framework of action. The focus on emergency and food assistance, nutrition intervention and the establishment of safety nets is particularly relevant to our region. The expansion of food assistance in the form of food aid, voucher and cash transfer is also relevant to our communities. The focus on delivering nutritious food to high-risk groups and on school-feeding and mother-infant programmes will ensure that families from remote communities and outer islands have access to basic food and nutrition.

We also want to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of encouraging sustainability for our farmers. It will benefit our local communities that the High-Level Task Force purchases local food supplies with food aid. That will encourage self-sufficiency and provide additional sources of income for our small-scale farmers.

We would like encourage the High-Level Task Force to discourage the practice of earmarking contributions. We understand that that may result in cutbacks in humanitarian projects in vulnerable countries in regions such as ours. We hope the High-Level Task Force and donor countries will identify the specific needs and vulnerabilities of countries when determining the level of assistance and contribution to be provided.

We thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to speak on this subject today. We look forward to working closely with the High-Level Task Force in taking immediate and effective actions to address the current food and energy security crises.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (the CANZ countries). For time efficiency, I shall deliver a shortened version of our circulated statement.

We are facing an unprecedented challenge. The global food crisis endangers the world's poorest and most vulnerable. It threatens to reverse gains made towards the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and hunger.

The CANZ countries are doing their best ready to assist those most affected. Ensuring a coordinated analysis and response to the current food price situation is a priority for the CANZ countries. While there is some debate about the relative importance of different drivers, the general consensus is that most of the drivers are medium- to long-term ones. Food prices are likely to remain higher and more volatile than in recent decades.

The CANZ countries welcome the strong resolve on this issue shown by the leaders of the Group of Eight at their summit in Japan. We urge countries to follow their declarations with concerted action to address the underlying structural causes of the crisis and to improve the efficiency and productivity of the agricultural sector and markets in developing countries.

In particular, we stress the benefits for all countries, developed and developing alike, of contributing to a positive conclusion of the Doha Round. It is critical that there be a breakthrough on negotiating modalities at next week's meeting of trade ministers in Geneva. A successful outcome to the Doha Round would remove major barriers and distortions to global agricultural and food trade and improve global food trade flows. It would open up new opportunities for agricultural and food production and exports by developing countries and make an important contribution to improving global food security.

The CANZ countries appreciate and strongly support the work of the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. The comprehensive framework of action is important and valuable because it represents a consensus view of most of the key international organizations. We are pleased with the overall approach of the framework, its response priorities in the immediate and medium terms, and its emphasis on the longer-term building of resilience.

The CANZ countries will continue to be part of the global framework to address rising food and fuel costs. The CANZ countries have already taken steps towards helping to address food insecurity through significant contributions of around $300 million, including to the World Food Programme's extraordinary appeal, and through the untying of food aid, with a special emphasis on procurement in developing countries.

The CANZ countries welcome the opportunity to work with other countries to ensure that biofuels production does not have negative impacts on the environment, promotes renewable energy use, provides economic opportunities and enables diversified agriculture.

Now that we have the comprehensive framework for action in its final form, we need to turn our attention to implementation. We agree that the implementation of the recommendations of the framework needs to use existing mechanisms. Over the coming months, the CANZ countries will be examining the final framework to consider how we can contribute further. We see the need for a comprehensive approach, including scaled-up support in agriculture and rural development and exploration of the role of social protection mechanisms. We stress that it is important for all countries to adopt appropriate domestic policy responses, including avoiding food export restrictions and untargeted food subsidies. We call on Member States to remove restrictions on the export of food for humanitarian purposes.

There is a challenge ahead to ensure that effective collaboration at the global level continues during the implementation of the comprehensive framework for action. We suggest that the Secretary-General may wish to consider a coordination approach modelled on the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, which emphasized communication, liaison and reporting on international responses. We are especially concerned with seeing such effective collaboration happen in least developed countries and small island developing States, which are particularly vulnerable.

The CANZ countries see a very strong need for the agencies involved in agriculture and rural development in least developed countries and small island developing States to increase their level of coordination and common programming and to consider how the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force can best be applied in each region. For example, an initial meeting of donors and regional technical agencies took place in Sydney this month to discuss possible regional coordination measures in the Pacific.

The challenges of increased fuel and food prices, combined with those of climate change, indeed make it all the more important that the increased resources directed to these crises be used to maximum effect. That will require us all to commit to strong local and regional partnerships, improved coordination, local ownership and better mutual accountability if we are to get results.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the least developed countries. We also align ourselves with the statement of the Group of 77 and China.

The group would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this event and for your opening statement. We would also like to commend the Secretary-General on his leadership role in addressing the global food crisis and for making available to us the revised version of the comprehensive framework for action developed by his High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

A multitude of factors explains the current food crisis. They include a sharp increase in consumption, lower productivity, unfavourable weather conditions, export restrictions, commodity market speculation, the increased use of crops for biofuels, high energy costs and the persistent asymmetry and distortions in international agricultural trade.

For oil-importing least developed countries, higher energy prices, together with the existing food crisis, have a further substantial negative impact on their already weakened economies. That leads in the short run to a significant load on the balance of payments and in the long term to a bigger loss in the gross domestic product and growth. High energy prices are also responsible for high food prices in terms of their linkage to irrigation, fertilizer and transportation.

The least developed countries will need substantive international support in terms of compensating for the excessive burden on their balance of payments. Access to modern, new and renewable sources of environmentally sound energy, energy technologies and technical know-how at affordable cost is important to the least developed countries in addressing effectively the twin challenges of growing food and energy prices.

In today's debate, the group of least developed countries will focus on the High-Level Task Force's report on the comprehensive framework for action. We are still in the process of examining the document. At this stage, however, the group would like to make the following preliminary comments.

First, the comprehensive framework for action has suggested a set menu of actions to assist communities and countries in need. The recommendations are comprehensive in terms of what needs to be done. Many of the recommendations are already in operation or in national strategies in a number of countries. The critical challenge before us is how countries that are already hugely resource-constrained can implement the recommendations.

We had expected concrete recommendations in that respect. The framework states in its executive summary that "it is not an investment programme and, therefore, it does not provide for a detailed costing". The framework estimates, however, that global incremental financing requirements for food assistance, social protection, agricultural development, budget and balance-of-payments support would have to be between $25 and $40 billion per annum to maintain progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 1 alone. This year, so far only $2.9 billion have been raised. The framework advises countries to mobilize additional resources to pay for food imports, but it has not spelled out how to mobilize the resources. It has not stressed the need for the development partners to enhance official development assistance.

The framework must match the necessary resource requirements, particularly for the least developed countries — those hit hardest by the crisis. The least developed countries are now net importers of food products. In 2006, the trade deficit of the least developed countries in food products stood at $6.7 billion. Quoting the forecasts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the framework states that the world will spend $1,035 billion on food imports in 2008, which is $215 billion more than in 2007. That will severely strain the budgets of low-income food-deficit countries, mainly the least developed countries, which will see their import bills soar by more than 40 per cent this year. The Rome Declaration called upon all donors and the United Nations system to increase their assistance to developing countries, in particular the least developed countries. However, the particular concerns of the least developed countries have not been addressed in the document.

The role of ODA in stimulating and sustaining agriculture and food production cannot be overstated. In recent years, ODA to developing countries for agriculture has been drastically falling from both bilateral and multilateral sources. Aid for agricultural research remains woefully inadequate in most developing and least developed countries. The framework notes that agriculture's share of ODA dropped from a high of 18 per cent in 1979 to 3.4 per cent in 2006. Additionality and predictability are crucial in aid flows into the productive sectors, including agriculture. In addition, foreign direct investment in agricultural production has been neglected. According to a recent report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, only less than 3 per cent of global foreign direct investment was made in the agriculture and food industries in 2005.

Multilateral trade rules have an important role in influencing food security. Some developed countries are providing subsidies and other market-distorting measures. Some food-exporting countries are imposing export taxes, quotas or bans on food exports under article XI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994. Such actions, however, have aggravated the food crisis. That needs to be addressed. The framework only encourages alternatives to export restrictions. It is clear that trade reform is an important element of the medium- to long-term policies to address high prices. The Doha Round must lead to reduced tariffs and diminished levels of domestic support in developed countries in order to ensure greater and fairer competition in trade in food and agricultural products. Developing countries need to have an effective special product provision and a special agricultural safeguard mechanism in place.

South-South cooperation, including through triangular cooperation, can provide an important catalyst for addressing the food and energy crisis at the bilateral, regional and international levels. Such cooperation can include better trade financing, early warning systems on food shortages and possible sources of food supplies, the regional marketing and trading of food between food-surplus and food-deficit neighbouring countries, and the exchange of best practices, technologies and technical experts on agricultural production. That needs to be addressed carefully, and we hope that the framework document will take it into account.

The framework anticipates that food prices will ease gradually in 2008 and that they are likely to remain high for a longer period. That is merely a projection. Owing to high volatility in agricultural production and the agricultural market, the crisis could even recur with greater intensity. The framework does not recommend any concrete standing mechanism against the potential future onset of such a crisis at a high or even higher intensity.

With regard to possible action, the framework suggests that coordinated arrangements at the regional or global level, such as real or virtual strategic stocks arrangements, could provide countries with greater confidence that their urgent needs could be met rapidly in the event of future food crises. In our view, that purpose would be better served by establishing a global food bank and an international food fund, as proposed earlier by the least developed countries. That could reduce the volatility of food prices in the world market and provide hedging against shortfalls and price shocks in a sustainable manner.

In conclusion, let me recall that it was underscored in the 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action that food security can be ensured

> "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".

More than a decade later, we are still grappling with the issue. More than ever before, given the current challenges of the global food and energy crises, we need to articulate urgent, decisive and collective action to address those challenges.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's meeting of the General Assembly represents an important logical continuation of a number of events sponsored in recent months by the international community to jointly formulate measures to address the global food and energy crisis. The Assembly is continuing the work carried out at the meetings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Ghana, the special session of the Economic and Social Council held in New York, the summit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held in Rome and the meeting of the Group of Eight held on the island of Hokkaido in Japan.

We believe that the United Nations and the developed countries must be the driving forces in combating the global crisis. In that regard, we consider important the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a High-Level Task Force to formulate urgent measures in response to the food crisis caused by a sharp rise in the prices of food products. The primary share of the responsibility for adopting such measures lies with developed countries.

Food shortages threaten the existence of humankind, and energy shortages threaten the development of society. The emergence and exacerbation of those problems in the twenty-first century demonstrate that humankind must consider a change in attitudes regarding lifestyles, nature, the interests of other countries and consumption policies. All indicators show this to be a systemic crisis that has so far affected only certain regions of the globe. However, given the lack of appropriate actions to counter it, the crisis could become universal, striking a crushing blow against sustainable development and jeopardizing social and political security throughout the world.

Belarus is not threatened by a food crisis. Our country's production of agricultural food products continues to rise and our domestic consumption of food is fully provided for. At the same time, Belarus cannot stand idly by and witness the problems and difficulties of other countries and regions. We will never be able to understand those who are impassive distant observers of crises, waiting calmly to see when and how they will be resolved. We reiterate our appeal to the Governments of donor countries and to the private sector to increase their support for the aid programmes for developing countries carried out through the FAO and the World Food Programme, and to cease all activities that are helping to prolong the food crisis. In particular, they should eliminate export subsidies and other barriers to trade in agricultural products and eliminate speculative transactions on the food market.

We must also be more selective in choosing areas for the development of alternative sources of energy, taking into account both national interests and the interests of the international community as a whole. We believe that new technologies will enable us to jointly achieve the broadest possible range of options for the development not only of sustainable biofuels that do not negatively affect the food market, but also of totally new renewable sources of energy whose use will not result in the destruction of our planet's viability.

The energy crisis is caused by many factors, ranging from the artificial creation of tensions in regions where energy resources are obtained to a plethora of barriers to the implementation of new technologies for clean and sustainable energy.

Unfortunately, the desire for excessive profits continues to remain the primary reason for the lack of stability in the energy market. In the spirit of constructive dialogue, we do not wish to dwell on those aspects in our statement. Rather, we wish to put forward several ideas regarding an extremely important factor that could make a decisive contribution to resolving the energy crisis, namely, energy efficient technology transfers.

The successful introduction of modern energy technologies is a prerequisite for achieving virtually all the Millennium Development Goals, from the elimination of poverty to the provision of universal education and a solution to the problem of climate change. We are confident that since those technologies are fulfilling an important global function in which all countries are interested, they should be considered as belonging to all humankind.

Here, we would propose the convening of a discussion at the General Assembly special thematic debates this autumn of the question of creating mechanisms to use those technologies on a global scale without violating intellectual property rights and taking into account the interests of all States.

In drawing up measures to address the global food and energy crises, in addition to the mandatory satisfaction of the needs and requirements of low-income countries, there is also a need to take into account the interests of middle-income countries. From 1978 to 2003, only one low-income country was moved to the middle-income category, while some 25 States moved from the middle-income to the low-income category. In that connection, there is a need to step up assistance by the United Nations and the World Bank to middle-income countries to help them reform their economies and, in particular, the energy sector.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to thank you for convening this very timely and most important meeting on the global food and energy crisis and to commend the Secretary-General for keeping us informed of the efforts of the Secretariat in addressing that crucial issue in a timely manner.

I would also like to associate my remarks with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Our consideration of the current global food crisis should start by admitting that our international early warning system was not functioning properly, despite all our hindsight, analysis and evaluation. The fact remains that we were caught off guard in our anticipation of and preparation to deal with such an essential and vital issue.

Egypt strongly believes that there is an urgent need for a global partnership to deal with the causes and repercussions of the current food and energy crisis in order to realize the interests of developing and developed countries alike — a global partnership that would surpass the narrow scope of national policies, orientation and interests to deal with the issue of food security in a more comprehensive development context.

As the comprehensive framework for action concludes, it is true that the global food crisis poses a threat to global food and nutrition security and creates a host of humanitarian, human rights, socio-economic, environmental, development, political and security-related challenges. However, it should not be forgotten that the centrepiece of addressing the root causes of the problem effectively should be sustainable development in its entirety, based on its three pillars — economic, social and environmental. Egypt agrees with the conclusion that the crisis stems from cumulative effects, poses a continuing challenge and requires an urgent comprehensive, coherent and coordinated response.

The crisis also underscores the validity of turning agriculture into a vibrant economic sector and of rectifying previously promoted policies and trends that adversely affected that essential sector, both from within and from outside. The adoption of a cash-crops policy at the expense of food security and the enhancement of other sectors in the economy at the expense of the agriculture sector were the result of globalization and of the increased move towards industrialization. That trend deserves a closer look if we are to reinstate the balance lost.

The methodology adopted by the revised comprehensive framework for action, based on a dual-track approach, is valid and sound, focusing on two sets of actions and time frames: urgent immediate needs and building resilience in the longer term. However, both sets of actions will remain a mere academic exercise if not coupled with a decisive political will that has been, and still is unfortunately lacking.

The framework concludes that global incremental financing requirements for food assistance, social protection, agricultural development, budget and balance of payments support are estimated at between $25 billion and $40 billion per annum to maintain progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1. Although the framework stresses that it is not a funding document or an investment programme, the way to meet such a huge financial burden is still without a clear road map. It will require greater commitment and political will from our partners.

In the same vein, the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force also appealed, among other things, for more flexibility and predictability in the funding of food assistance and safety nets. That validates what developing countries have always advocated — the need for quality and predictability of funding, a call often met with unwarranted negative reactions from developed countries.

We would also like to highlight the recommendation of the Task Force that increased allocations of resources should be additional to current funding levels, and not resources diverted from other critical sectors necessary to achieve the MDGs, such as education and health.

The reality is that the crisis requires international dialogue based on common interests and mutual interdependence with a view to establishing an international code of conduct that addresses the current expansion in the production of biofuels as an alternative source to traditional energy and sets standards for the responsible use of agricultural crops.

The link between issues pertaining to the global food crisis and the energy crisis and the lack of progress required to achieve the MDGs in many developing countries highlights the importance of addressing those complex issues in an integrated manner so as to be able to strike the proper balance between all those diversified interests. The developing countries need to be able to achieve economic growth and sustainable development while contributing to dealing with mounting global challenges, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

We also emphasize the importance of actions at all levels — national, regional and international — aimed at addressing the food and energy crises. I would like further to underscore here the declaration adopted by the African Union summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 30 June to 1 July 2008, entitled "Responding to the challenges of high food prices and agriculture development". The declaration is a clear demonstration of the importance that Africa attaches to addressing the negative implications of the crisis on the African continent as a whole and the readiness of its countries to shoulder their responsibilities in the context of international efforts aiming at achieving that continent's development objectives.

We also note the outcome of the Group of Eight summit held in Hokkaido Toyako, Japan, which covers a wide range of short-, medium- and long-term responses, as well as agreed action on global food security, including ensuring the compatibility of policies for the sustainable production and use of biofuels with food security. While these actions are aimed at assisting those suffering from food insecurity and hunger, we stress the importance of their honest implementation.

Above all, we stress the importance of reversing the overall decline of aid and investment in the agricultural sector, and we stress the commitment to significantly increase support for developing countries' initiatives in that field, including work towards doubling the production of key food staples in certain African countries within 5 to 10 years. We emphasize the importance of continued consultations on that issue between the Secretariat and Member States in order to give the necessary guidance and support to those proposed sets of actions. Intergovernmental follow-up and coordination with the Task Force through the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are crucial prerequisites for the success and effectiveness of those efforts.

In conclusion, I would also like to draw participants' attention to the letter dated 19 June 2008 addressed by the Permanent Representatives of Chile, Egypt and Indonesia to the President-elect of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. The letter suggests that the Assembly consider the issue of food security and development as the central theme of the high-level segment and general debate of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, without prejudice to other matters on the international agenda. We trust that the general membership will support that proposal to allow our leaders to take part in shaping the international response in the General Assembly to the crisis. We express our readiness to consider any further action by the General Assembly on that issue during the remainder of the sixty-second session and under the capable leadership of President Kerim.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I thank you, first of all, for having taken the initiative of convening this special meeting on the global food crisis.

My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The global food crisis is of concern to us in many ways. No country is spared the effects of the crisis, and its possible spread may lead to a chain reaction of destabilization. The crisis is of concern to us because it is contributing to increasing the number of the poorest people and the malnourished. The current difficulties reflect the extreme vulnerability of many fragile areas, which are insufficiently prepared to cope with the harshness and dysfunction of global markets.

Algeria, a net importer of agricultural products, is concerned by the food crisis, as are a significant number of developing countries, that are subject to the fluctuations of the rates on world markets. The food crisis has been exacerbated by speculation in the commodities markets and reflects the inherent flaws of the global economy and, as a result, requires structural solutions.

The food crisis is the result of both internal and external factors, linked primarily to the mechanisms and regulations governing the markets for agricultural products. Contrary to certain theories, it is not energy prices that are the direct cause of the drastic rise in the price of agricultural products, although we recognize that production and transportation costs are to a certain extent affected by those of energy. In fact, in real terms, these increases in basic food commodity prices have far exceeded those of energy over the past six years.

Among the causes of the crisis, we note first the drop in agricultural production in developing countries as a result of agricultural policies followed in accordance with the harsh doctrine of comparative advantages. Policies based on the doctrines of the World Trade Organization and the international financial institutions have paradoxically had a considerable impact on food crops and local agriculture, which have either been abandoned or focused on speculative crops.

The global food crisis clearly shows the implications resulting from the dysfunctions in the international financial system and the means of regulating basic food product markets.

It is our hope that the coordinated efforts of the United Nations system and the international financial and trade institutions will be able to contribute to resolving the crisis, which requires appropriate short-, medium- and long-term responses. The United Nations High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis is planning to lay the bases for a strategic framework for global short-, and long-term action to address the effects of the crisis worldwide. Algeria firmly supports that step.

The immediate priority is of a humanitarian nature, which involves providing food for those populations in immediate need by stepping up food assistance to the most disadvantaged countries. At the same time, long-term solutions must be sought, in particular through the improvement of productivity. A resolution to the crisis also requires action aimed at agricultural production development by stepping up production and encouraging investment in the countries affected by the crisis.

In particular, we underscore the urgent need to implement projects and programmes designed to cope with the threats posed by the global food crisis to the food security of developing countries. Poor countries must be able to feed themselves through the restoration of sustainable agriculture as the driving force for development so as to exploit the enormous potential represented by small farmers.

National efforts to avert the effects of the crisis should be supported through short- and long-term action at the international level. It is high time to take real action to enshrine the right to food as one of the pillars of human rights that we must progressively realize in the context of food security.

In conclusion, it is the duty of the Assembly to follow and assess the implementation of the measures taken and commitments made by the major players in order to determine their actual impact on resolving the crisis and to correct their course if necessary.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): In this hour of incomparable and incomprehensible crisis, one might be tempted to lament with Hamlet in asking his to-be-or-not-to-be question:

> "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
> No more".

But we should not do so, for global survival with peace, progress and prosperity must be the destiny of this generation and succeeding ones. Therefore, we have to confront and overcome the crisis.

The Philippines wishes to commend you, Mr. President, for the swiftness with which you took your decision to convene this plenary meeting to confront and discuss the global food and energy crisis. Bringing the General Assembly together at the earliest possible hour underscores the critical urgency of this issue and provides strong authority and a strong mandate to the appeal that the nations of the world need to act now and to do so in a united, cooperative and coherent manner.

The Philippines also congratulates and commends the Secretary-General and the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis for finalizing, within the shortest possible time, the comprehensive framework for action that is before us today. The unparalleled speed with which that comprehensive document was drawn up is incontrovertible proof of the selfless dedication to duty of the Secretary-General and the High-Level Task Force and of the capacity of the United Nations to respond quickly and effectively to situations or problems that require immediate attention and resolution by the Organization, lest it become historically irrelevant.

The Philippines fully endorses the position taken by the Group of 77 and China, as expounded by the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda. However, we wish to underscore a number of points.

The comprehensive framework for action is the result of a much longer process of thorough deliberation and discussion. The need for it was brought about by a confluence, if not a conspiracy, of factors and events that has led to the rapid rise in global food prices. The negative implications of that rise in food prices — coupled with other serious challenges on the energy and environmental fronts — for the global development agenda have forced United Nations Member States to seek authoritative guidance, such as that provided in the form of the comprehensive framework for action. Thus, the framework may provide the answer to the crisis under consideration.

The various discussions on this issue that have taken place at the United Nations in New York have reflected an understanding that the problems generated are interlinked and multidimensional. Thus, recognizing the comprehensive framework for action means that each country must take a look at its provisions and apply or adapt them in accordance with particular national circumstances.

The broad common denominator, however, as pointed out by Mr. Jim Butler, Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, at yesterday's Economic and Social

Council panel discussion on the humanitarian challenges related to global food aid, is that, under the current circumstances, global demand for food outstrips supply. That increased demand may be attributed to, inter alia, population growth and longevity; new sources of demand, such as biofuels; and changing dietary and food preferences in major consumer markets. Logically, all those factors will continue to increase demand, which leads experts to conclude that the era of low food prices may not be returning any time soon.

On the supply side, the combination of underinvestment in the agricultural sector, stagnating yield growth, the negative impact of high energy prices and the disastrous effects of the extreme weather events brought about by climate change have resulted in shortfalls.

If we add the pressures brought about by a poor global economic environment, it is clear that this complex issue can be addressed only with the full cooperation of all stakeholders — national Governments, the United Nations, international development partners and financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and, of course, producers themselves, whether they be small-scale or members of agribusiness. It is just as clear, however, that the direct responsibility for providing succour to each person in need rests with each affected Member State.

For the Philippines, that means that immediate action has to be taken at the national level to address the crisis caused by rice prices. Thus, the Philippines has embarked forthwith on a rice self-sufficiency plan for the period 2009-2010, aimed at increasing the country's rice output to 19.8 million metric tons by 2010. In order to achieve that, 30 billion pesos are being allocated to spend on research and development, agricultural infrastructure, sustainable integrated farming systems, rice biotechnology and education. Bilateral assistance has been sought, and a $216.5 million food security agreement has already been signed with the United States. The World Bank has also indicated that the Philippines is eligible to receive $1.2 billion under its global food programme.

At the international level, the Philippines, during the Rome summit, called for the creation of a global grain reserve to protect importing and exporting countries alike from sharply fluctuating prices. The Philippines also encouraged countries that plan to embark on a biofuels programme to do so using non-food sources so as not to affect food security. Furthermore, in support of increased funding for global research and development, the Philippines has strongly sought support for the International Rice Research Institute, which is based in the Philippines. I spoke extensively on that subject at the Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the Global Food Crisis, held on 20 May.

Today, the General Assembly can literally make a world of difference with regard to the most pressing issue of the global food and energy crisis. By endorsing the comprehensive framework for action and implementing the proposals contained therein, the General Assembly, as the most representative legislative body in the world, would be able to provide a coherent and coordinated response to the immediate needs of the many millions adversely affected by high food and energy prices and, more important, lay the foundation for continued stable and rational markets in the food and energy sectors. That decision must be made now. The Philippines joins the rest of the Assembly in making that decision today or, at the latest, at any time during the remainder of the sixty-second session.

Let me end with a note on something that we have probably failed to consider: the role of people themselves, in their individual capacities, in the crisis. I say without fear of contradiction that the vices, bad habits and bad practices of people have contributed to the crisis. I am referring to the vices or habits of avarice, greed, selfishness, ambition, pride, envy, inordinate desires and lust, which have caused or resulted in, among other things, the insatiable desire for wealth or gain, ostentatious living, the unnecessary display or use of wealth, reprehensible acquisitiveness and utter wastefulness, and will continue to do so.

Baruch Spinoza said that avarice, ambition and lust, are nothing but a species of madness. If only people would restore the values of self-discipline, self-control, self-sacrifice and self-denial through a reduction in selfishness and an increase in solicitude, compassion and the virtue of sharing, each would become a part of the solution and would not be part of the problem. The message, then, is clear: the food and energy crisis that we face today can also be solved through a personal transformation or change of heart on the part of everyone on this planet, especially the rich and the powerful. A decent soul once said, "He that will not permit his wealth to do any good to others while he is living prevents it from doing any good to himself when he is dead".

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We appreciate the measures taken by the Secretary-General to address the current food crisis and support the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis in its efforts to develop an international cooperation framework on food security. We hope that the agencies concerned will keep in contact with Member States in implementing the framework and take measures in the light of the specific needs of Member States.

Food is vital to human survival and has an impact not only on the economy and people's well-being in each country, but also on the development and security of the world as a whole. There are now more than 800 million people living under the threat of starvation. Surging food prices will swell that figure and seriously hinder the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in some countries. Developing countries are hardest hit by the global food crisis, which has even entailed social unrest in some countries. That has a direct impact on world economic stability and development and is not conducive to lasting peace or the common prosperity of the world.

The current rise of food prices is caused by the interplay of multifaceted factors. It is worth noting that an argument has recently been advanced stressing the so-called responsibility of large developing countries for the crisis and blaming their development for the recent worldwide food price increases. That does not correspond to the facts, nor is it a constructive attitude to adopt in undertaking efforts to solve the problem. With the current expansion of economic globalization and enormous advances in science and technology, we do not lack the means to solve the food problem. The key is to embrace a spirit of common development, actively and effectively coordinate policies and actions and make concerted efforts to safeguard world food security. To that end, countries need to approach the food issue from a broader and longer-term perspective and jointly formulate a strategy for sustainable food development.

In that connection, I would like to emphasize the following three points. First, we must build consensus and resolve the food issue within the framework of sustainable development. All countries should approach the food issue from a strategic perspective and accord top priority to the issue of food security in their national development agendas. They should focus on agricultural production and policy support for agriculture development, and increase financial and technological inputs to agriculture so as to improve food output and increase food reserves. Major food-producing countries should undertake further efforts in that regard. Developing countries should continue to improve their production capacities, while developed countries should provide the necessary financial and technical support.

Secondly, we must address both the symptoms and the root causes of the problem and take an integrated approach to the food issue. The food crisis can be attributed to complicated and multifaceted factors. Countries need to view those factors as interrelated and, bearing in mind both long-term and immediate interests, take comprehensive measures in the fields of finance, trade, assistance, the environment, intellectual property rights and technology transfers in order to create favourable conditions for food security. None of those aspects should be neglected. Countries should work together to keep global food prices stable. Prudent policies should be adopted to balance the development of biofuels and the maintenance of food security.

Thirdly, we must strengthen dialogue and coordination and explore a new framework for international cooperation. We must create a favourable international trading environment and establish a fair and equitable international trade order for agricultural products. All countries, and developed countries in particular, should demonstrate goodwill in the Doha agricultural negotiations, remove trade barriers, demonstrate flexibility over such issues as the reduction of agricultural subsidies and give sufficient consideration to the special concerns of developing countries. The international community needs to develop a reasonable mechanism for financial support and technology transfer to help developing countries improve their capacity for planting, disease and pest prevention, food reserves, and food output.

China has always attached great importance to agriculture, especially the food issue. China depends mainly on domestic food production. For nearly 10 years, China has met over 95 per cent of its food demand on its own and exported a net amount of 8 million tons annually of staple grains such as wheat, rice and corn. China's current average agricultural tariff is only a quarter of the world's average. China takes an active part in international food and agricultural cooperative efforts and strives to make a contribution to global food and agricultural development. Since 2003, China has provided nearly 300,000 tons of food assistance, built 14 integrated agricultural projects and established more than 20 agricultural technology demonstration centres beyond its borders. We have trained over 4,000 agriculture-related managerial and technical staff for other developing countries. We are ready to share further experience on agricultural development with other developing countries within the framework of South-South cooperation and to provide various kinds of assistance to the extent possible.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this timely debate.

The steep rise in global food prices is a multifaceted structural crisis that requires a fully coordinated response and a comprehensive strategy from the international community. Japan highly appreciates the strong leadership role the Secretary-General has personally provided, together with the President of the Bretton Woods institutions, by quickly rallying the United Nations system through the establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

Japan is pleased that the Task Force has finalized the comprehensive framework for action, which constitutes an important foundation for coherent action on the part of the entire international community. Japan hopes that the framework will be swiftly translated into implementation plans for countries in need to ensure the immediate delivery of assistance.

Japan, as the host country for both the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) and the G8 summit this year, has made every effort to increase synergy in the actions taken by TICAD IV, the G8 and the United Nations system, including the Task Force.

The TICAD Yokohama Action Plan stipulated the commitment to strengthening agricultural capacity in Africa by doubling rice production, increasing investments in infrastructure and financing small-scale community-managed irrigation and water management schemes. Agricultural and rural reform in the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development was recognized as an important means of achieving food security and poverty alleviation and as having the potential to be a major force for driving economic growth in Africa.

Global food security was also among the most important items on the agenda of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako summit, which resulted in the issuing of a special statement this past week. Above all, G8 leaders commended the leadership of the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions for convening the High-Level Task Force and urged the relevant stakeholders to swiftly implement the comprehensive framework for action and to achieve prompt delivery for countries in need.

The G8 leaders renewed their commitment to taking all possible measures to address the food crisis, from short-term food aid to medium- and long-term responses. The members of the G8 have committed over $10 billion to that purpose since January this year.

The G8 also agreed to take a number of actions aimed at assisting those who are suffering from food insecurity or even hunger. It is imperative to remove export restrictions and to expedite the current negotiation at the World Trade Organization aimed at introducing stricter disciplines on those trade actions, which prolong and aggravate the situation and hinder humanitarian purchases of food commodities.

As for medium- and long-term measures, the G8 stressed the importance of reversing the downward trend in support for developing countries' initiatives in agriculture. The leaders also agreed to support improvement of infrastructure such as irrigation, transportation and storage systems. They agreed to ensure the compatibility of policies for the sustainable production and use of biofuels with food security, and to accelerate development and commercialization of sustainable second-generation biofuels. The leaders established a G8 experts group to monitor implementation of those commitments and to contribute to forming a global partnership.

Japan's approach to the food crisis is based on its strong commitment to promoting human security globally and is aimed at protecting every individual's sense of security and at meeting basic human needs. Considering the serious impact that the sharp increase in food prices has had, particularly on people in developing countries, Japan recently approved an additional food aid package of approximately $50 million to be disbursed by October, on top of the $200 million in food aid that has already been disbursed this year.

As for medium- and long-term measures, Japan has committed to assisting in increasing agricultural productivity, including aiming to double rice production through the development and rehabilitation of irrigation facilities and new crop varieties in Africa, and capacity-building for 50,000 agricultural leaders in African countries. Moreover, at the Rome conference, Prime Minister Fukuda of Japan pledged an additional $50 million to help impoverished farmers to boost food production and announced that the Government was prepared to release over 300,000 tons of imported rice. In total, Japan has so far committed approximately $1.1 billion of food and agricultural assistance to developing countries this year.

Agriculture and food production have not been given as high a priority as they deserve in the national policies of many countries. We should take advantage of the great political attention the United Nations has succeeded in harnessing and turn the crisis into an opportunity for the international community to take strong global action and make greater investments in agriculture and food production.

The will of the international community to tackle the food crisis is well confirmed now. What we need are more concrete actions and follow-up on the pledges made. Action must be well supervised and coherent, under the coordination of the United Nations.

One can hardly overemphasize the importance of a well-coordinated and structured response on the part of the different organizations within the United Nations system as well as on the part of international financial institutions. We expect the United Nations, under the strong leadership of the Secretary-General, to continue to play a central coordinating role in providing an effective response to that global challenge.

Japan is ready to be in the vanguard in striving to ensure food security for all, which is a foundation of life and an essential element of human security.

Mrs. Dinić (Croatia): Mr. President, let me thank you on behalf of the Croatian delegation for organizing this meeting on the issue of food security. We believe that the General Assembly is the appropriate forum to address this very important issue following the Food and Agriculture Organization global food safety summit in Rome in early June 2008 and the Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council held in May.

I am sure that we are all aware of the seriousness of the crisis that the world is facing and the imperative to act immediately. Croatia appreciates the initiative of the Secretary-General in setting up the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and also welcomes its report on the comprehensive framework for action. Indeed, the United Nations system, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, has an important role to play in that regard. Close partnership with the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations is needed as well.

Increasing investment in agriculture, including support for agricultural research, is the basis for dealing with the food security issue in the long term. The current world food crisis provides an opportunity to work towards boosting agricultural production in developing countries, in particular in Africa, where smallhold farmers urgently need development assistance. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take some urgent measures to provide access to food for the poor, particularly for the most vulnerable.

We commend those countries that have responded swiftly to meet the funding gaps for emergency food assistance operations. We particularly appreciate the fact that food security and the fight against poverty were high on the Group of Eight summit agenda. Our common challenge is to increase food production and to manage the impact of rising food prices on macroeconomic policy.

The world will face another security crisis if it fails to react adequately and to provide affordable food for those in need. The hunger that some parts of the world are facing is absolutely unnecessary; it is degrading and deeply unjust. It is a fact that more than 9 million children in the world still die every year before the age of five, mostly from malnutrition and preventable diseases. That situation continues despite all the efforts of the United Nations system and the entire international community, in particular UNICEF, to alleviate the suffering of and to assist vulnerable groups, especially mothers and children.

Notwithstanding those efforts, we believe that it is inadmissible that a solution to the problem remains elusive. One needs to bear in mind that, in the current food crisis, there is a great risk of a further 100 million people being pushed back below the $1-a-day poverty line unless we act now. Moreover, the crisis also threatens to undermine progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, setting many countries back from the gains of the past few years.

The collective and concerted efforts of the international community, individually and globally, are still of the utmost importance. As the President of the Republic of Croatia rightly pointed out at the Rome summit last month, "We must admit responsibility and we must accept it".

Croatia accepts that there are several complex structural causes, some of them interconnected, of the global escalation in food prices, such as rising energy costs, climate change and turbulence in financial markets. Increased usage of renewable energy sources and alternative fuels could be a part of the solution to the energy crisis and can help to promote efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change. The most important challenge is to maintain a balance of different sources of energy production in support of sustainable development.

It is also true that today's crisis did not come about overnight. It is partly a consequence of inadequate sustainable development and the lack of universal access to international trade and international financial institutions. In that regard, Croatia would support an early conclusion of the World Trade Organization Doha Round that would provide significant new market opportunities for developing countries.

For its part, Croatia is ready to work actively with other Member States and to engage constructively in the implementation of a comprehensive strategy and action plan to address the current food security crisis.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Mr. President, thank you for convening this meeting, which constitutes another timely occasion to address the acute situation brought about by the surge in food and energy prices worldwide.

I would also like to commend the Secretary-General for recognizing the need for prompt and coordinated global action.

The High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General John Holmes, has responded to the Secretary-General's initiative with the comprehensive framework for action. The document is a very thorough undertaking, as it seeks to analyse the current food crisis and to propose action for tackling the food and energy security challenges.

Even as hunger has decreased by 50 per cent worldwide since 1969, the number of malnourished people is now tending to increase as a consequence of the escalation in food prices. The deep-seated distortions plaguing the world farm trade are among the factors driving the current trend. Poor farmers in developing countries, unable to compete in world and local markets with the subsidized exports of many developed countries, have also been hit by the high prices of farming inputs. As a consequence, they have not been able to invest in expanding food production.

Droughts have also affected production in various regions of the world. Likewise, bad weather, coupled with low-skilled farming, has thwarted efforts to improve yields, especially in Africa. Human vulnerability is at the centre of the current dilemma. How do we increase food production sustainably, while meeting the growing need for clean sustainable energy so as to mitigate the effects of global warming? How do we guarantee fair access to land tenure so as to empower farmers, especially in developing countries, to raise food production and participate in the global commodity trade under fair competition?

Meeting those challenges will require determined commitment by the international community through concerted action. Negotiations and action need to communicate seamlessly, and early warning mechanisms need to be perfected to prevent hunger from threatening to unravel progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially concerning the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

In that respect, strengthened family agriculture can contribute significantly in developing countries. In my country, for instance, more than 50 per cent of the food needs of the population are met by small-scale farmers. Through credit, technical assistance and improved distribution channels and storage, farmers can rapidly attain higher yields and provide the required food stocks to eliminate hunger and malnutrition.

Brazil is convinced that food production and renewable sources of clean energy, such as sustainable biofuels, can be harmonized. Our own experience over the past 30 years is an example of that. President Lula has consistently pleaded for the debate on biofuels to be based on facts and to take into account not only their different sources, but also the different national circumstances. Biofuels from sources other than cereals are compatible with food security, provide an important source of income to farmers and constitute a valuable tool to combat climate change.

Food security should be seen from both the supply and the demand sides. The successful experiences of some developing countries can prove useful to others in the developing world and can serve as a platform for international cooperation.

Better and sustainable land management, increased investments in agriculture, scaled-up official development assistance for agricultural development, including improved seeds, equipment, capacity-building and transfer of technology, as well as market access, through a balanced completion of the World Trade Organization Doha Round, will be important elements in overcoming the crisis.

The Task Force advocates reaching an international consensus on biofuels. It calls for an appraisal of biofuel policies and underscores the need to establish agreed policy guidelines on biofuel production that take full account of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, food security, income and energy needs at local levels in all countries. It correctly views biofuels as an opportunity for countries that have a comparative advantage in feedstock production and recognizes that biofuel development can be compatible with food production.

It is our hope that the international conference on biofuels to be held in Brazil in November will stimulate a frank and well-informed debate that will facilitate an evolving consensus on the matter. The debate will focus on issues such as the sustainable use of natural resources, particularly land and water, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the generation of benefits for local communities. It will also provide a forum for consultations among stakeholders on investments in biofuels.

We believe that the Task Force should propose a menu of options to counter the pervasive impact of escalating oil prices on food security and human vulnerability. As emphasized by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras earlier this morning, the recent joint declaration issued at the summit of heads of State of the Central American Integration System and Brazil called for the General Assembly to examine the impact of the recent surge in oil prices and of possible speculative moves on food costs and the consequences for developing countries, in particular. The debate on the issue is greatly needed in order to consider what possible actions, commensurate with the magnitude of the problem in the short-, medium- and long-term, could be envisaged.

In closing, I would like to reiterate Brazil's willingness to participate in an objective and well-informed dialogue with all Member States that could be conducive to finding solutions to the current food and energy crisis. Our commitment is guided by the principles of sustainable development. We hope that implementation of the comprehensive framework for action will be the objective of concerted action by Member States, the United Nations and the international financial institutions with a view to overcoming the current situation of food and energy insecurity.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.